

# new jersey Architecture



July/Aug/Sept 1979







CELEBRATING THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE CHILD



Official Publication of  
**NEW JERSEY SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS**

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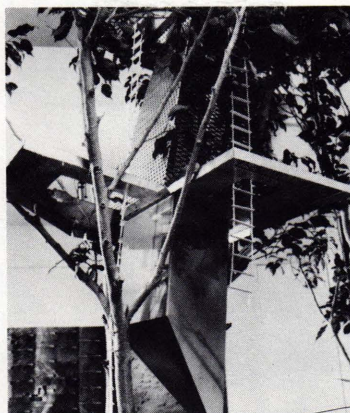
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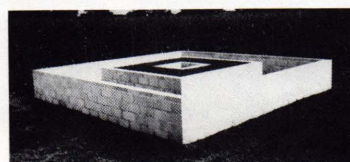
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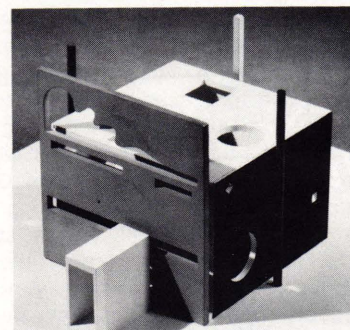
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

The N.J. Society of Architects wishes to acknowledge the tremendous number of man hours contributed to this issue by the office of Rothe-Johnson.

**Cover:** Illustration  
 from Mind,  
 Child, Architecture  
 Promotional  
 Poster



# checklist



Photograph by Margaret Buchholz.

“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.” — “The more things change, the more they remain the same,” the oft-quoted Gallic truism was borne out again recently with the work of Matthew Rue, chairman of the New Jersey Society of Architects’ Energy Committee, whose “new” idea for home insulation — seaweed — is at least 15 years old.

Eelgrass, a tall, slender plant that grows abundantly in coastal waters, is the basic material for Rue’s innovative technique. His idea, which has received an initial \$1,500 U.S. Department of Energy planning grant, grew out of a conversation with 80-year old Mayor Reynold Thomas of Harvey Cedars, the beachfront community on Long Beach Island where Rue maintains a summer home. Mayor Thomas, a down-the-street neighbor, was reminiscing about his boyhood and telling of how he was employed along the shore gathering and drying eelgrass, then used widely for home insulation, mattress ticking, fresh fruit protection and even stuffing in coffin padding.

That bit of information stuck with Rue and he began some sleuthing, looking into the construction methods used in erecting several nineteenth century buildings being demolished in the area. Sure enough, the air spaces between the walls were packed with eelgrass.

According to Rue, the plant, a form of seaweed, curls into knots as it dries to form a series of air pockets that trap and retain heat. The dried strands of eelgrass are odorless and do not decompose because of their high salt content.

Incidentally, live eelgrass performs a vital ecological function, serving as a source of

food and oxygen for marine life. The scheme developed by Rue makes use only of the dead blades of the weed that annually clog the surface of numerous bays and inlets along the New Jersey coastline and, ironically, are removed and disposed of at considerable cost.

Under Rue’s plan, the idea he is developing with the federal grant, the tons of dead eelgrass lying on the surface of many bays and coves along the New Jersey coastline would be collected and processed by his unique “floating factory.”

Admittedly ungainly in appearance, the craft he’s designed is nonetheless admirably suited to the task at hand. To navigate the shallows, low-draft is a must, so the vessel will be either barge-like or have the conformation of a twin-hull catamaran. A stern wheel will harvest the floating eelgrass, transferring it to a conveyor that will move the leaves into an oven powered by solar energy. Additional facilities on board will allow for baling and packaging the dried materials. A test model is scheduled for launching later this year.

Citing the practicality of solar power, Rue notes that rice is dried with sun-powered machinery in India. “So why not eelgrass,” he says.

The solar-fired oven is, of course, an appropriate symbol of the current search for ways to conserve and to develop alternate forms of energy. With Rue, however, solar power is no whim. Much of the heating costs of his winter home are absorbed by the solar energy unit designed into the house. (When’s the last time *your* heating bill went down?)

Rue also observes that the manufacture of conventional insulating materials, require a tremendous amount of energy, a further reason for turning to sun power.

How practical is eelgrass as an insulating medium in twentieth century buildings? Well, the U.S. government thinks the potential is real enough for further development; that’s the reason for the initial grant. The idea must rank pretty high in Washington circles, because Rue’s project is one of only 25 proposals in “Appropriate Technology,” as it’s called, awarded to the more than 830 groups and individuals from New Jersey who made application.

Rue has no illusions that eelgrass insulation can hope to eliminate the fiberglass, plastic foams and assorted other materials that currently make up the market. What can’t be ignored, though, is the assessment of the idea by one of the regional administrators of the federal grants program: “A very interesting and unique application, which, if it works out, can provide insulation from a readily available material at a cost low-income families can afford.”

Matt Rue’s evaluation of the project is, in its fashion, a summary statement of what architecture and architects are all about: “The main thing I want to prove is usefulness,” he says, adding that “I want to make people aware of the natural things around them.”



## Second Quarter '79

A national recession appears to have arrived during the second quarter, as predicted by many economists. According to the New Jersey Economic Policy Council, the recession could last for about a year, and will be mild.

Nationally, the deteriorating economic situation was reflected in most major business indicators, but in New Jersey construction activity was strong, closing the second quarter 37 percent ahead of 1978.

Despite high mortgage rates, residential building in New Jersey led the way for construction improvement, registering a 54 percent increase over last year. In the non-residential sector, construction activity declined slightly in April and May, but closed the second quarter 18 percent ahead of the 1978 pace. Construction of manufacturing plants was the strongest factor in this increase, followed by medical building and office building, while stores and shopping centers fell behind last year's rate.

Part of these increases in building volume can be attributed to inflation in construction material costs. Recent figures for the Metropolitan New York-New Jersey region indicate a 12 percent increase in building costs over the past year, with dramatic increases in petroleum-based products and insulation.

In New Jersey, construction activity was strongest in Atlantic County, while Passaic and Hudson Counties also registered sizeable building increases.

### Forecast

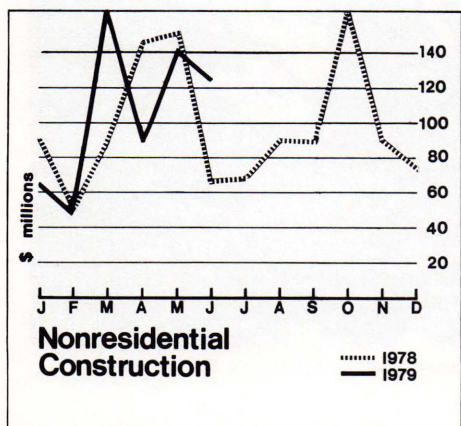
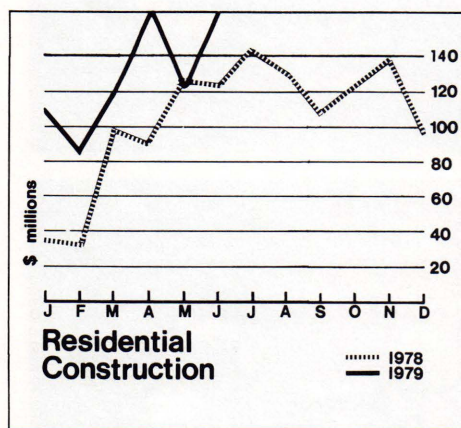
During the recession, New Jersey's economy should closely match national trends, according to the mid-year report of

the New Jersey Economic Policy Council. They predict a local inflation rate of 8 to 9 percent, and an unemployment rate of about 8 percent in the coming months.

The continuing availability of mortgage money should help limit the economy's effect on residential construction, making it considerably less severe than in 1974. Because homes are appreciating so fast in price, consumers remain willing to pay the current high mortgage rates, and demand continues unabated. As the economy slows down, a combination of lower inflation, greater fiscal restraint, and higher unemployment will lead to relaxation of monetary policy. Rising credit availability coupled with strong consumer demand for housing will spark a rapid recovery of residential construction.

Business investments are expected to hold up reasonably well, and should be a stabilizing factor helping to keep the recession's effects mild on nonresidential construction. Office buildings continue to be the most active nonresidential market, because the supply of available office space is still short of demand. According to data for new plans now on the drawing boards in New Jersey, increases should be expected in government and educational building this year. High interest rates and slowing economic activity, however, will limit construction activity.

According to the New Jersey Department of Labor and Industry, the overall volume of planned construction already in the pipeline suggests that building activity in New Jersey should hold up reasonably well, at least during the early stages of economic slowdown.



## Statewide Construction Activity

	April '79	May '79	June '79	Year-to-Date Totals (5) 1979	1978	% Change 1978-79
Nonresidential (1)	\$ 91,088,000	\$141,558,000	\$123,327,000	623,536,000	527,021,000	Plus 18%
Residential (2)	185,808,000	122,491,000	200,740,000	845,763,000	548,795,000	Plus 54%
TOTAL BUILDING	276,896,000	264,049,000	324,067,000	1,469,299,000	1,075,816,000	Plus 37%

## Statewide Nonresidential Construction January — June 1979

	Bidding Volume (6)	% Change 1978-79	New Plans (7)	% Change 1978-79
Stores & Shopping Centers	\$15,217,000	Minus 59%	\$ 64,282,000	Minus 61%
Office Buildings	89,665,000	Plus 225%	287,821,000	Plus 7%
Medical Buildings	49,445,000	Plus 359%	80,231,000	Minus 34%
Educational Buildings	36,704,000	Plus 27%	108,246,000	Plus 6%
Government Buildings	13,914,000	Minus 30%	63,470,000	Plus 26%
Manufacturing Plants	93,691,000	Over 100%	87,700,000	Minus 1%

## Construction Activity by Counties (3)

	Jan. - June '79	% Change 1978-79		Jan. - June '79	% Change 1978-79
<b>ATLANTIC COUNTY</b>			<b>MIDDLESEX COUNTY</b>		
Nonresidential	19,334,000	Plus 12%	Nonresidential	73,620,000	Minus 18%
Residential	176,875,000	Over 100%	Residential	42,727,000	Plus 23%
TOTAL BUILDING	196,209,000	Over 100%	TOTAL BUILDING	116,347,000	Minus 6%
<b>CUMBERLAND COUNTY</b>			<b>MONMOUTH COUNTY</b>		
Nonresidential	7,530,000	Minus 22%	Nonresidential	22,618,000	Plus 35%
Residential	9,026,000	Minus 8%	Residential	65,523,000	Plus 31%
TOTAL BUILDING	16,556,000	Minus 15%	TOTAL BUILDING	88,141,000	Plus 32%
<b>HUDSON COUNTY</b>			<b>PASSAIC COUNTY</b>		
Nonresidential	27,828,000	Plus 94%	Nonresidential	26,761,000	Plus 66%
Residential	15,436,000	Plus 98%	Residential	36,543,000	Plus 97%
TOTAL BUILDING	43,264,000	Plus 95%	TOTAL BUILDING	63,304,000	Plus 82%
<b>MERCER COUNTY</b>					
Nonresidential	12,575,000	Minus 32%			
Residential	30,581,000	Plus 13%			
TOTAL BUILDING	43,156,000	Minus 5%			

### FOOTNOTES

- (1) Nonresidential buildings include commercial, manufacturing, educational, religious, administrative, recreational, and other buildings not designed for shelter.
- (2) Residential buildings include houses, apartments, motels, dormitories, and other buildings designed for shelter.
- (3) Statistics for selected counties shown are based on figures derived from standard metropolitan areas within the counties.
- (4) All statistics are based on monthly reports of contracts for future construction, prepared by F. W. Dodge Division of McGraw-Hill Information Systems Co.
- (5) Cumulative figures for "Year-to-Date Totals" reflect adjustments not distributed to the individual months.
- (6) Based on figures for projects actually bid and under construction in 1979, as compiled by Engineering News Record.
- (7) Based on figures for projects on the drawing board in 1979 but not yet out to bid, as compiled by Engineering News Record.



# viewpoint

**Mind, Child and Architecture**, which has received endorsement from the National Commission on the International Year of the Child, is a national design conference and exhibition to be held this fall in Newark. The event will focus on the architectural world of the child and will include important child related works of this country's foremost educators, artists and architects.

Because of the importance of this conference and exhibition, the New Jersey Society of Architects is pleased to participate in **Mind, Child and Architecture** by giving the New Jersey School of Architecture the opportunity to present this special, expanded issue of **Architecture New Jersey**.

We also wish to acknowledge and thank Professor Donald Wall, Ms. Helen Demchyshyn and the New Jersey School of Architecture for the important work done in creating, organizing and directing **Mind, Child and Architecture**. Because of their efforts the State, our profession and the children will benefit.

Edward N. Rothe, AIA  
Chairman, Editorial Board  
Architecture New Jersey



*Discovering the floor plan, spontaneous play with cuisenaire rods by 4 year olds, Bede Montessori School, Englewood, N.J.*



This issue of *Architecture New Jersey* is intended to be part announcement, part catalogue for the **MIND, CHILD, ARCHITECTURE** conference-exhibition taking place this fall in Newark. Guest editor is Donald Wall from N.J.I.T.'s School of Architecture faculty. He is also the guest curator of the Newark Museum's exhibit *Where A Child's Architecture Dreams Come True* (Sept. 23-Nov. 25), Rutgers Paul Robeson Art Gallery exhibit *Dennis Oppenheim: Genetic Extensions, Energy Transfers, Works With Offspring 1971-1979* (Oct. 3-30), the School of Architecture's exhibit *Childhood Sources in Recent American Art/Architecture* (Oct. 3-26), as well as the conference's director.

The conference dates are October 3, 4, 5, 6. Anyone who takes time away from the office won't be disappointed. More than 100 scholars and creative artists are participating. They will address the central issue concerning architecture's influence on a child's emotional, intellectual and creative development. It is an area about which we, as a design profession, know relatively little. The nearly 70 sessions have been organized in the follow manner: content dealing primarily with psychology and mental imagery of architecture, or aspects of MIND, takes place Thursday, October 4. Content emphasizing education, with the children's own conceptions taking the lead, are scheduled for Friday, October 5, under the heading CHILD. Saturday, October 6 has been reserved for ARCHITECTURE in hopes that the working professional can attend more easily.

To give an idea of the range of themes and works to be seen and heard, Charles Moore's office, for example, is contributing eleven three foot square panels depicting *Castle Islands For Children* as their gift to this 1979 International Year of the Child celebration. Then there is John Hejduk's legendary *Element House* for his daughter Renata. It is, according to Hejduk, "the last of the houses of optimism before the emergence of an architecture of pessimism." (See the interview between Wall and Hejduk for details.) The Newark Museum will be retro-



fitted with a fantasy garden, complete with huge plastic leaves, building boxes, connector rings, roof sheathing, the total device measuring 60' long which the children can use to construct life-size architecture of their own design. In the midst of the fantasy garden will be Les Levine's *House of Gloves*, a stereotyped image of house made up of 9,000 red, blue and yellow knitted gloves containing a television monitor where gloved animals carry on a conversation about world affairs. Obviously bring the kids along. They too will love it.

Models of Seguin's 1860 architecture projections for idiot children are being built especially for this show. Various types of experimental research dealing with how children respond to architectural information of diverse sorts will augment how children themselves conceive of architecture both real and visionary, from coloring book rooms to energy efficient houses in the shape of raindrops.

There's much, much more: a talking puppet lecturing on architecture, seminars dealing with therapy environments for handicapped children, The Design Log Method for assessments, day care design, data on how children orient themselves spatially...speculations of what tomorrow's architecture might be like for children.

In addition to presentations by scholars from many diverse disciplines, with themes ranging anywhere from children's unique conceptions of Radburn to building blocks architecture, there will be keynote addresses by David Rockefeller, Jr., Charles Moore, Burton White, Kenneth Koch and Buckminster Fuller. So come out and enjoy what promises to be a festive state of the art gathering. **MIND, CHILD, ARCHITECTURE** is a New Jersey State Committee for the Humanities project and is co-sponsored by The New Jersey Institute of Technology and Rutgers University Newark. Admission is free.

What follows is a sequence of interviews between some of the contributors to *Mind, Child, Architecture*. Unlike the 1960's



when art was predominantly anti-anecdotal, the 1970's saw the emergence of two new contents in art, comparatively speaking. The one content had to do with childhood references. The other had to do with architectonic references. The merging of the two subjects signified a different kind of primitivism at work. Rather than speculating on the socio-cultural origins of creativity as was done in the early 20th century and 19th century, many artists turned to childhood as the origin of aesthetic feelings and conditioned responses. Obviously the correlations between adult preoccupations and child-derived occupations will not be simplistic, but rather complex.

Of those being interviewed, John Hejduk, Will Insley, Allan Wexler, Gordon Matta-Clark and Helen Demchyshyn graduated from schools of architecture. Hejduk is a practicing architect and Dean of Cooper Union's School of Architecture. Generally, but erroneously, associated with the "white school of architecture," Hejduk is one of our leading theorists/philosophers.

The others turned away from practice for various reasons. Will Insley can be called a metaphysical visionary whose conceptions for a future civilization's architecture are based on mathematical permutations allied with alogical procedures, systematically pursued. Allan Wexler explores the rudimentary thought structure underlying construction of the primitive hut, the temple, the rude enclosure. Gordon Matta-Clark dissected abandoned buildings thereby converting the entire fabric of architecture into a sculptural object where the concept of use or function is rendered irrelevant. Lastly, Helen Demchyshyn seeks linguistic correlations between a child's thought structure and adult stage-set architecture.

Alice Aycock, Harriet Feigenbaum and Elisa D'Arrigo are sculptors. Aycock and Feigenbaum generally prefer large site constructions, while D'Arrigo is best known for her intimate ceramic modelling of rooms and furniture, though she too has



executed large scale site works. All three, in very different ways, tend to recycle critical childhood experiences as fundamental subject matter in their art.

Robert Cumming is a photographer. He relies on studio set-ups to convey what seemingly is reality when in fact it isn't there at all, except photographically. His art is an art of whimsy, humour, consummate skill, conceptual subtlety. Cumming's *Discourse on Domestic Disorder* can be regarded as a classic account of how the young adolescent interprets architectural meaning: certainly **not** in the manner of a Le Corbusier or a Frank Lloyd Wright. The *Discourse's* stories are gleaned from his own childhood and from the childhood memories of his students.

Probably Dennis Oppenheim is the most elusive and enigmatic of those being interviewed. Oppenheim's favored medium of artistic transmission is the human body and mind; his means of expression is the human psyche functioning as a canvas surface which receives depicted configurations as well as being the sender of messages. The physicality of external conditions, like earth, like scaffolding, like cones and wedges, platforms, are nothing more than "launching stations" for an art which aims at regenerating psychology at a primal state.

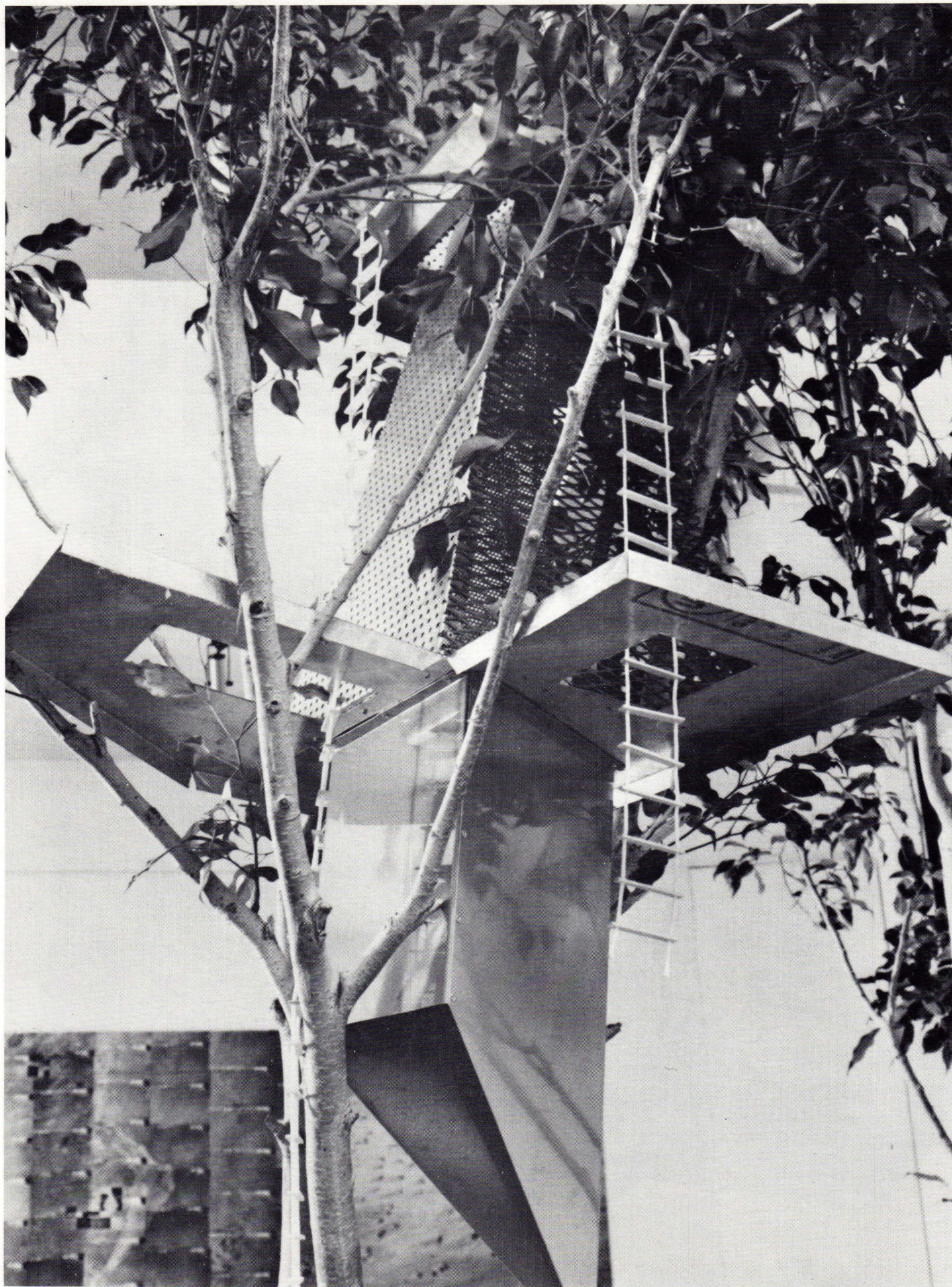
The other individuals are psychologists and psychiatrists who have observed children between those critical coalescent years from birth to age 3-4. It is during this time that the transference occurs from the parent's torso as a protective enclosure to architecture as protective enclosure.





*R. Bliss and Company Doll House, circa 1890, (Collection: Newark Museum)*







# True Stories and Not So True Stories About Childhood

**Wall:** Okay, who's got some stories to tell?

**D'Arrigo:** I grew up in the Bronx...

**Cumming:** Well, when I was 10 I used to play at this construction site that my parents told me not to go near, but it was a good place to play Army. I stepped on this big goddam nail. Man, I knew what I stepped on right away, but I couldn't get the nail out of my foot. I sat down right away with this big piece of wood stuck to my foot so I couldn't make it home. I screamed for help till someone came and took me home. My folks went with me to the hospital but by that time my Dad had pulled the nail and board off and took off my bloody shoe and sock. They didn't have much sympathy cause they said I shouldn't have been playing there. I think their blaming it on me and the thought of the tetanus shot were worse than the pain of the nail puncture, but I really felt stupid just sitting there with this big goddam piece of board on my foot, not being able to go anywhere.

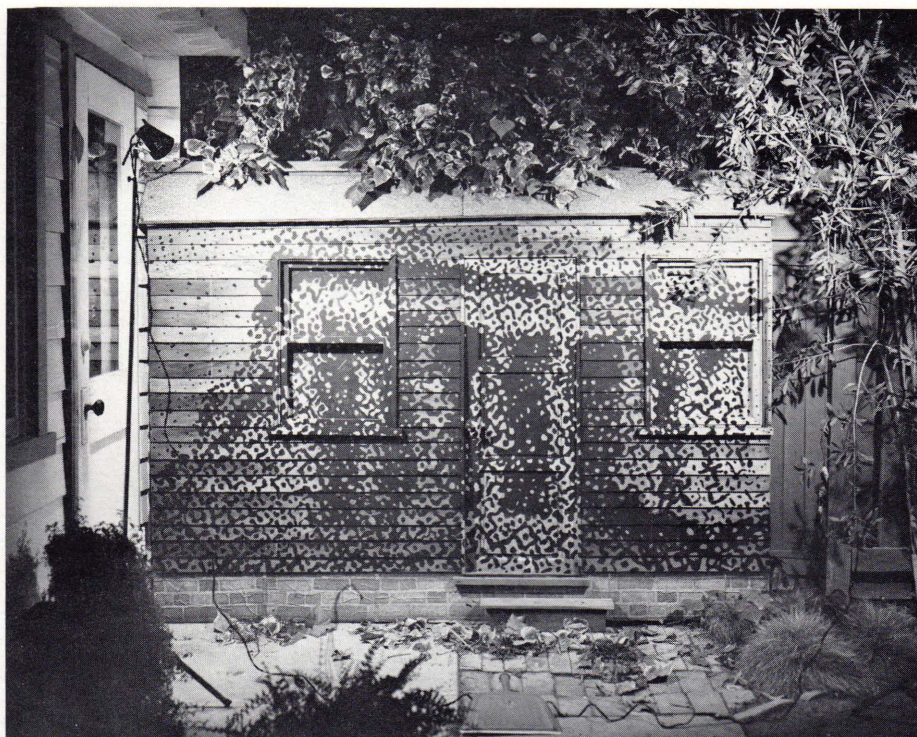
**Wall:** Is there anything else?

**Cumming:** I had to stay at my uncle and aunt's house when I was about 11 while my sister was being born. We stayed at their vacation home for two weeks which wasn't finished inside and had lots of knotholes in the floors and walls. The bathroom wasn't finished so we had to take our baths in a set-up tub in the basement. They had three daughters and there were also two visiting cousins... 5 girls and me the only boy. It wasn't too bad; at night we were supposed to be asleep upstairs, but we'd find a knothole in the floor above my uncle reading his paper and drop kleenex down on his head. Some of the girls were just developing little titties and getting pubic hair and it looked like great fun at the knotholes above the set-up tub on bath day, but there was this older cousin who kept teasing me at the knothole and wouldn't let me look at the girls. My aunt made me take my bath, and it was humiliating knowing that they were all taking turns above me.

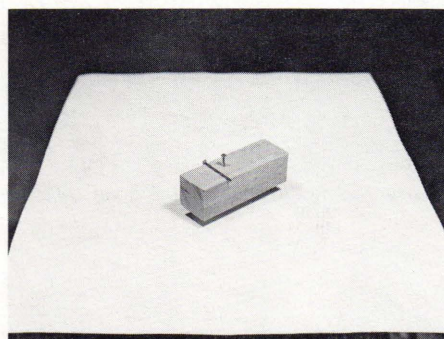
**Wall:** I guess architecture's function is different for adolescents than it is for adults. Knotholes serve different purposes depending on the stage one finds himself in, I suppose. I wonder if a piece of architecture ever looks exactly the same to everyone.

**Cumming:** You know, when I was a kid, I used to imagine that a yo-yo was really a ball on the end of an elastic string. Me and my best friend used to bounce a tennis ball off a neighbor's garage. The garage wall was dusty and wherever the ball hit it would leave a big circle in the dust. Eventually it looked like a big polka-dot pattern.

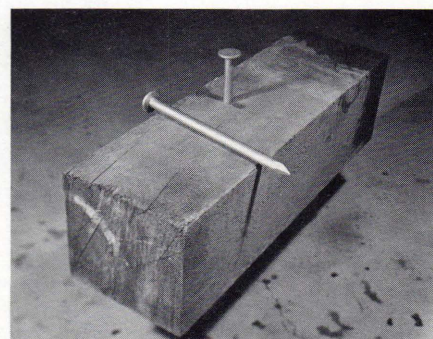
My dad always used to get caught in downpours when we went fishing... Hey, did you ever go to an amusement park where they



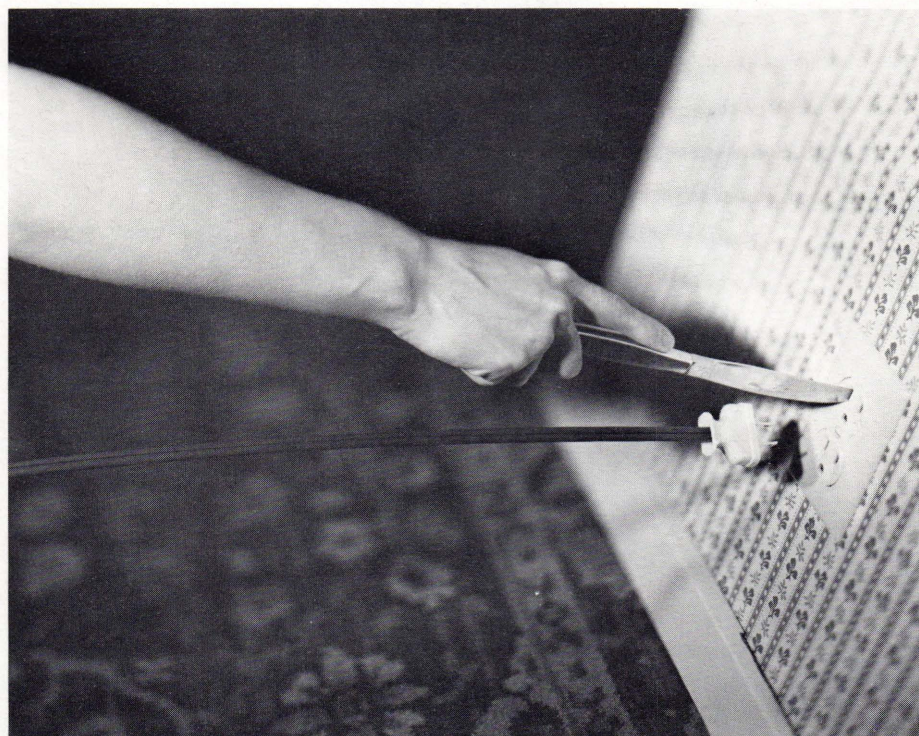
Robert Cumming, *Facade With Classical Overlay*, 1978



Robert Cumming, *The Ruination of Easter Vacation*, 1974

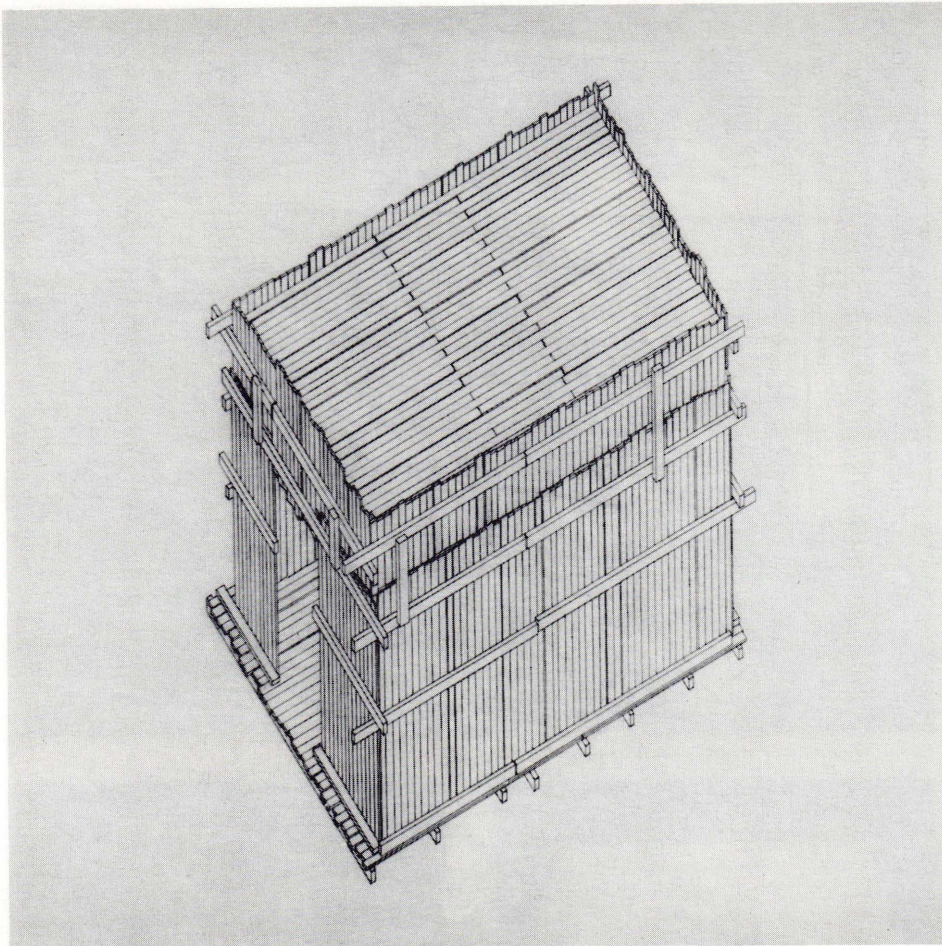


Robert Cumming, *An Enlargement*, 1974

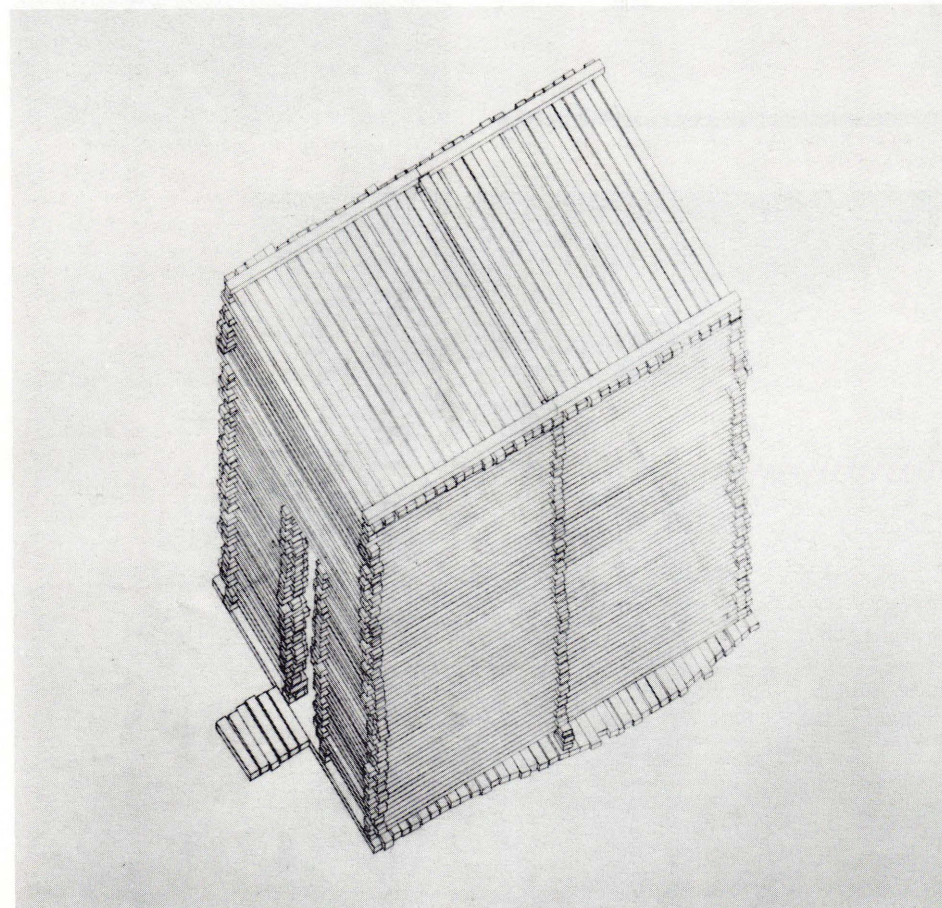


Robert Cumming, *Electric Shock*, 1974





Allan Wexler, 10'x10'x16' Enclosure Using Cut and Nailed 8' Long 2x4's, 1978



Allan Wexler, 10'x10'x16' Enclosure Using Cut, Un-Nailed 8' Long 2x4's, 1978

have those shock machines? You put in a dime which starts the current running through those two handles that you take in your hands and try to pull as far as you can. The further they get, the stronger the current gets. An index on the machine indicates how much a man you are by how much current you can take. Christ, when I was a kid they had me try one and I just couldn't let go. They had to pull me off the thing screaming.

Have you ever stuck a knife in an electric socket?

Man, when I used to survey for the Power Company, we were out on this right-of-way under those huge high-tension towers and we had this new kid starting his first week. The boss tells him to measure how high the wires are off the ground as a joke. Well, this kid takes a 200 foot steel tape and slings it up toward the wires as hard as he can. I saw him wind up and heave it, but it was too late to stop him. Normally he would have been killed by the current when the tape hit the wires, but the tape just disintegrated and knocked the kid back off his feet about 10 feet. All he got was some small burns on his hand.<sup>1</sup>

**Wall:** Anyone else got some childhood recollections?

**Wexler:** Building with playing cards is an early architectural experience for children. I use 4 foot by 8 foot sheets of plywood in much the same way. There are two major ways to design space: predetermine the space then construct it. Or predetermine the architectural building unit and a process and let that determine the space.

Before I begin constructing enclosure I set up certain arbitrary rules concerning materials, process, tools and final dimensions. The finished construction evolves naturally out of these rules, like using 8 foot long 2"x4"s uncut, nailed with overlap, or nailed without overlap, etc. This procedure is similar to a child's way of constructing with toy building blocks; there are existing rules, amount of blocks, sizes, shapes and joining systems.<sup>2</sup>

**Wall:** So you are hypothesizing the existence of two basic ways of determining any architectural form. Anybody else have any 'two' stories. Not true stories, 'two' stories. Let's engage in some neo-logisms: you know, nonsense rhyming, like happy dappy, sappy, mappy, crappy; drippy, sippy, lippy... Kids do it all the time.

**Bergman:** There are two kinds of space, enclosed space and open space. The model of the enclosed space is the womb. Lewin states that true claustrophobia is regularly connected with fantasies of being in the womb and of one's own birth.<sup>3</sup>

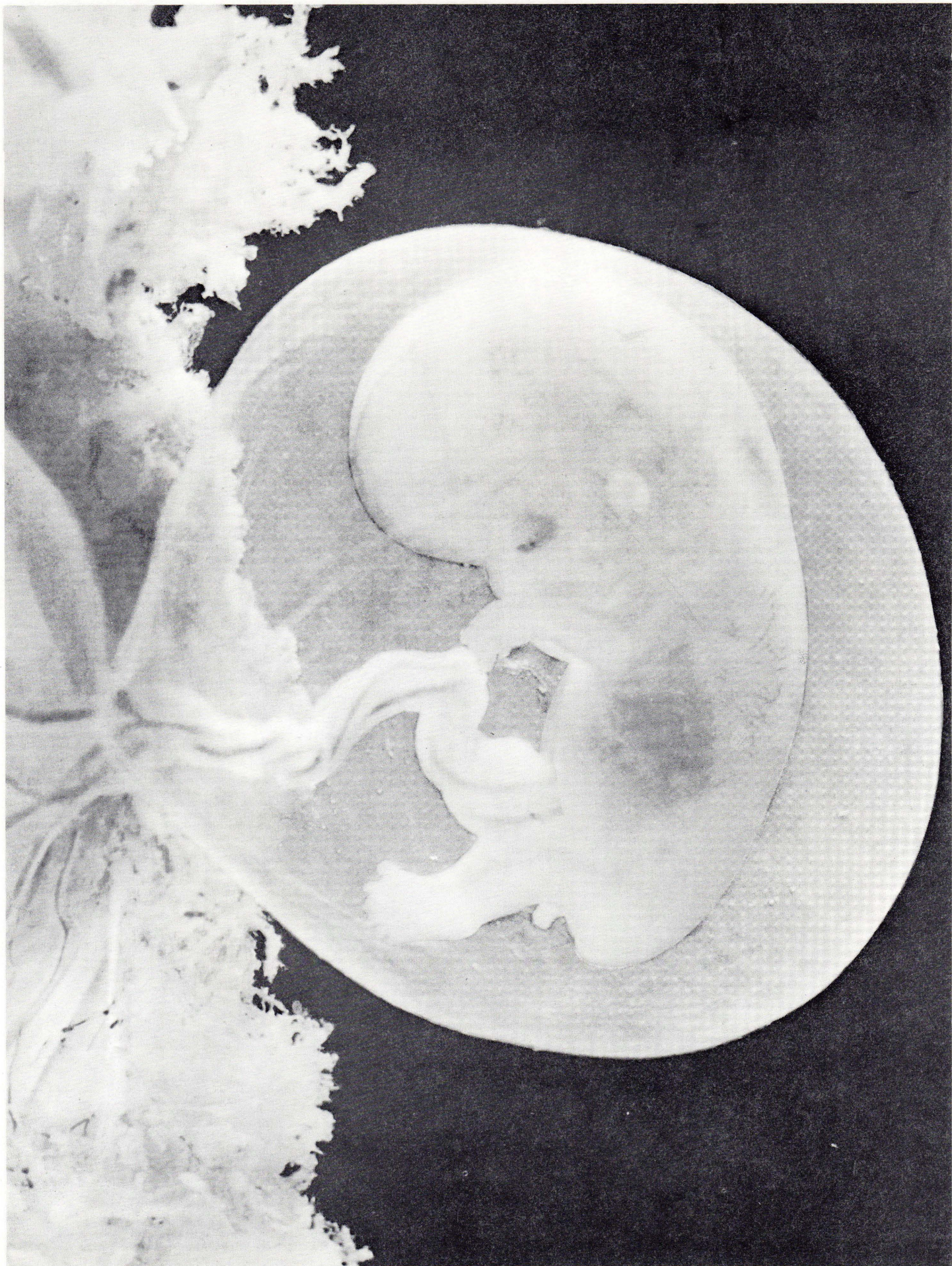
**Asch:** Identification with the fetus inside the mother is associated with two fantasies of dread. One, the danger of being squeezed out passively, abandoned and flushed away like a bad, smelly stool; this involves the fantasy of birth as an anal process of separation from the mother; it is pre-genital and does not involve the father. Two, the danger of being passively chewed-up, dis-





*Four month old fetus in the amniotic sac, (Photo: Lennart Nilsson, from Behold Man; courtesy of Seymour Lawrence, Inc. and Albert Bonniers Forlag)*





*Fetus in third month, (Photo: Lennart Nilsson, from A Child Is Born; Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, Inc.)*



solved and digested, to be fused with the mother on the most primitive level, with the terrifying loss of identity. These are two distinct anxieties with mainly anal and oral drive derivatives. One is fear of separation from mother while the other is its opposite, a fear of complete fusion. One involves abandonment by the object, while the latter consists of loss of the self-representation.<sup>4</sup>

**Wall:** That sounds an awful lot like Geza Roheim's libido concept of culture where "nothing satisfies like the original nipple," the stage following pre-natal space, the space of the womb.

Have you ever seen those photographs of a fetus in the womb? Fascinating. Repulsive. Especially those with the fetus clutching at the walls of the amniotic sac. Looks like a shroud or a lace head-piece. Or a Roman arch. I wonder if the pre-natal experience is the infant's first architecture? I also wonder how we get from the cradling curvature of mother's torso, arms, breast, a close-in shot of the nipple, to the hard edges of euclidean architecture? I wonder what **really** goes on emotionally in the baby when he/she discovers that mother's nipple has been ripped away forever, so he has to content himself with the corner of the crib. Even more so, since all adults fantasize to some degree, and regress to a great degree, I wonder what goes on in the adult when he also finally discovers that the original nipple has been ripped away forever?

**Balint:** There are apparently two basic ways in which people respond to this traumatic discovery. One is to create an ocnophilic world based on the fantasy that firm objects are reliable and kind, that they will always be there when one needs them, and that they will never mind and never resist being used for support. The other is to create the philobatic world which goes back to life prior to the experience that objects emerge and destroy the harmony of the limitless, contourless expanses...<sup>5</sup>

**Wall:** Yeah, but have you **seen** those photos of the fetus in the womb? What crazy nut, except perhaps Keisler, would want it? Nils-son sure destroyed that fantasy. He gave us actual photographs of fetal architecture. Now, as adults, we can imagine it. I doubt that children have any knowledge of such space, consciously or unconsciously. I like Piaget's position best. He maintains that spatial concepts are acquired rather than innate, and develop as a result of interactions between self and the world. And not too quickly at that.

**Bergman:** There is no space between the nursing infant and the mother.

**Wall:** Do you mean physically there is no space between the infant and the mother, say, when sucking; or do you mean that the child has no **concept** of space?

**Bergman:** The infant at first has no knowledge of space, no knowledge of an outside world, or of the mother as a separate entity... During the differentiation subphase one can at times observe the conflict between the desire for mother and the breast, and the

lure of the outside world; between the need for a space between himself and mother, and a desire to undo that space. An infant at that age often acts as though he wanted to devour the mother, to literally attack her with an open mouth — the ultimate undoing of the space between them.<sup>6</sup>

**Spitz:** With the cutting of the umbilical cord a cleavage takes place between mother and child. They become discrete physical entities. At the same time he is driven by a desperate urge to reestablish the previous state, both mother and child strive for as close a contact as possible with each other, culminating in the nursing act. But at the end of nursing they are driven apart again, a cycle which is recaptured with each nursing act.<sup>7</sup>

**Wall:** Undoing the space... that sounds like Gordon Matta-Clark's work: the undoing of a building. What you are describing, Spitz, when added to Bergman's mouth story, becomes the basis for a real horror story in which **all** humanity shares: an infinitely repeating see-saw of a mouth attacking the nipple and then withdrawing from the nipple, then attacking, then withdrawing. Gordon Matta may be more essentially Freudian than anyone cares to believe.

**Demchyshyn:** Hasn't oral greed, oral ferocity, been the main theme of fairy tales for centuries? And wasn't it Bettelheim who brilliantly commented upon oral gratification as the underlying motivation for the Hansel and Gretel story, especially the part of the Gingerbread House as being an image which all children the world over can respond to in the same basic way?

**Wall:** Yes, sure, but before we get into the fairy tales I want to pursue further the theme of the spatial relationship between mother and child, then come back to how these spatial experiences are included in stories. Eventually I want to isolate the age where children themselves begin to understand the symbolisms being communicated in fairy tales. The reason for this should be quite apparent: perhaps the time of childhood which an adult most easily recalls might correspond to the age when he was first able, as a child, to mentally reconstruct the fairy tale narrative.

Perhaps a child's ability to make up stories about what they did, where they went, who they met in their imagination, what was said, what should have been said, are the stories which the adult is dredging up in memory. The memory trace in this case being not any real life experience, but fairy tale experience. In order to get to this issue we first have to understand how a child develops spatial understanding, which includes the architecture of the surrounding space. How about some comments from Bergman? Your work at the Masters Children Center in New York more than qualifies you to speak to this issue. Certainly there is more to the first spatial experiences than the pleasures and terrors of nipple space? How does the child get from there to telling stories about animals, houses, pussycats, and so forth?

**Bergman:** During the differentiation subphase, seeing itself, looking at people and things not mother, becomes a most pleasurable activity. The nursing baby under five months of age seems to gaze steadily into the mother's eyes; but from about five months on, the baby, after the first hunger is satiated, will actively look around and follow both visual and auditory stimuli. As soon as the breast hunger is satisfied, the world out there competes with the breast. The world out there becomes an enticement and impetus, though the libidinal energy with which the urge to explore is invested is still supplied directly by the mother. The 'undernourished' child does not have the desire or energy to explore, or the explorations become painful rather than pleasurable, an aspect of early stranger or strangeness anxiety. The ability to distance visually precedes the ability to reach and explore tactilely, at first the body and face of the mother, but, increasingly during the differentiation subphase, the faces of others, as well as interesting objects in the environment, especially objects attached to people, such as jewelry and eyeglasses. The exploration of the 'other's' face or body during the differentiation subphase is often followed by a return to close bodily contact with mother.

Each phase of the separation-individuation process seems to have its own optimal distance between mother and child. While this varies with each mother-child pair, according to their temperament and predilection, one might possibly see these variations as the outcome of the process of mutual adaptation between mother and child. In other words, then, the optimal distance for each child during a given subphase would be a compromise between what might be optimal for a particular phase of development and what would be possible for a particular mother and child. To illustrate: during the differentiation subphase the available instruments for distancing and approaching are the eyes and the reaching-out arms and exploring hands. The optimal distance thus would be one allowing the infant maximal use of these instruments while preserving the maximal amount of closeness compatible with the emerging need for distancing. In order to distance, the baby has to be somewhat apart from his mother and yet close enough to be able to reapproach her. Thus, the optimal distance is no longer attained by the mother's holding the infant closely in her arms as during the symbiotic phase, but by holding the infant loosely enough to leave torso and arms free for exploration; in this position he can pull away from mother far enough to look at her from a greater distance. The infant held too closely will push away and, as a last resort, prefer to be held by others. The infant whose mother's hold is painful or uncomfortable will push away and prematurely try to be on his own. The infant placed at too great a distance by the mother will experience the distancing process as painful, will clamor to be held, and will cling.



In all cases the infant begins to have a voice in determining distance or closeness during this first phase of separation-individuation process. The space explored and created during the differentiation subphase, from about five to eight months, is a space between mother and child. The space surrounding the mother — especially her feet — as well as the space surrounding the child is essentially enclosed. Open spaces are as yet inaccessible.

The differentiation subphase is at about age eight months succeeded by the practicing subphase. As his ability to bridge the space increases, the creeping and crawling infant creates a new space between himself and his mother. He can now bridge the space as well as create a space not only by looking and reaching, hearing or being heard; he can now bridge the space with his body, as he can actively leave his mother and then return. During the practicing subphase there is a great investment in developing ego functions, as well as in the world out there. The baby is relatively oblivious of the mother, as he is not yet fully aware of his separateness. Mother is the home base to which the baby periodically returns to restore his waning energies. However, there are times when he creates a distance greater than he can comfortably bridge. Then suddenly he can be overcome by the feeling that he cannot return to mother. Yet on the whole, if during the differentiation subphase the infant had operated largely within the mother-child space and had eventually learned to know and respond to her as a special person, during the practicing subphase the most important space is out there. The practicing infant seems almost compelled to seek out open space, and he does this in an elated mood. As the mother is still experienced as part of the self, the space is usually not frightening; the practicing infant is actually surprised when he falls and mother is not automatically at hand to rescue him.

In the course of practicing, the toddler becomes aware that his mother is not automatically at hand, that he cannot always get back to her when he wants, that she cannot automatically shield him from all pains and frustrations. In other words, after a period of practicing encounters with the outside world, as well as with his mother, the toddler is repeatedly faced with feelings of helplessness. Thus he becomes aware of his separateness. An important change occurs in the direction of his movement and experiences in space. While the practicing infant generally moved out in the direction of the big world, protected by the illusion of mother's magical presence, the rapprochement child moves back toward the mother. However, he does not return empty-handed. It is most characteristic of him to bring objects found in the big world back to mother and to deposit them in her lap. During differentiation, the space was confined to the space between mother and child and the space immediately surround-

ing them; during practicing the space seemed to have no limits; during rapprochement we see clearly for the first time the movement in space that becomes so important from then on, the movement that is truly essential, namely leaving home base (the mother) and returning. But this is by no means easily accomplished. Earlier, during the phase of differentiation, we described a conflict between the wish to incorporate the mother and to distance from her. During the rapprochement subphase, the conflict between wishing to be autonomous and separate, and yet wanting mother ever present and available becomes enlarged by the cognitive developments that require the toddler to relinquish his illusion of mother's presence in their shared omnipotence. During the rapprochement crisis, the toddler, who wants to have it both ways, often cannot bear either situation — to be close to mother forces him to be more passive than he likes, and to be away from her confronts him with feelings of helplessness and intense longing. Thus, during rapprochement, transitional spaces acquire extraordinary importance.

During rapprochement, in the enlarged space, the conflict over closeness and distance becomes central. The space between mother and child now turns into a space of conflict between them. At times the toddler insists on shadowing every move of his mother, knowing her whereabouts, controlling her; at times the opposite behavior, driving her away, becomes characteristic. The toddler is forever running away from mother, escaping, yet expecting to be swept up in her arms. Another characteristic pattern is that of veering away, going toward mother, and in the last moment changing direction. The period of rapprochement is one of indecision. On the one side is a fear of re-engulfment; on the other side is the fear of abandonment.

The rapprochement subphase is followed by an initial attainment of object constancy. This implies a growing acceptance of separateness and an increasing internalization of the love object. Mother becomes more an internal presence, and the child between two and three can imagine and accept her being elsewhere. Thus the need for incessant coming and going is diminished. The child is better able to admit temporary separations, substitute adults, and can become absorbed in activities in the outside world. Symbolic play begins to substitute for the actual doing. A child of that age, instead of going to mother, can begin to play at being mother, father or baby. A child of this age can begin to play house or castle or cave, and so find symbolic representations of the enclosed mother space.<sup>8</sup>

**Wall:** That's quite a sequence. It tells us that at the time a child is first able to recount stories about playing house, at the time a child is first able to image architecture even in the most schematic and most primitive of ways, then that imaging will carry along

a whole host of prior experiences dealing with terror and with love, with feelings of abandonment and with being bound, with yearnings and with frustrations, and it is this emotional framework which colors first conceptions of architecture. We can expect adults who use childhood-derived feelings, experiences, and images in their adult art works to rely heavily on these types of psycho-ontogenetic contents: the desire to rip away at mother, the desire not to be held; the desire to wander; the fear of wandering. These are all primal counterparts to the Gestalt shapes of the circle, square, triangle, rectangle, etc. The fairy tale, the childhood story, will be highly charged emotionally and configurally, yet because each child experiences the world uniquely, and because the adult's mind overlays childhood reminiscences with dense metaphoric meanings and associations, the resulting art work will be one and the same time both universal and idiosyncratic, simple and complex, clear yet ambiguous, closed yet open, conducive yet repelling, complete yet fragmentary, suggesting the dynamics of evolving states rather than the passivity of crystallized states. This automatically separates architecture-derived-from-childhood sources from an architecture-derived-from the user-need program of a client. The former seeks the state of emotional euphoria, a highly mercurial condition where desires and motivations often outweigh products; while the latter seeks the problems-as-solved state, a highly stable condition in which the resulting product outweighs everything else. The one inevitably leads to performance architecture, as we have in Aycock's work, Matta-Clark's. The other inevitably leads to object architecture, as we have in Insley's conceptions, in Hejduk's work, though even in Hejduk's recent work there is this new presence of a narrative story line underpinning the resulting architecture. I am referring here to *The House For The Inhabitant Who Wouldn't Participate*. Even its title is telling us that something ideologically is taking place quite unlike past work.

So let's get back to true stories and some not so true stories about childhood, and how architecture got to be the way it is.

What about the House of Rabbits Story? That was built at Cranbrook. It might be a good place to begin since it deals with oral greed, or oral love as the case may be, and while it doesn't involve a child voraciously attacking the mother's nipple with mouth open, shark-like, the Rabbits story does exude that sense of horror underlying many fairy tales, underlying a child's fearful expectations of what may and what may not happen in the real world.

**Aycock:** Oh, that's a good story. It's a wonderful story. A true story. A mystery story. And it's talked about in *Shanty Town* too. It's kind of a macabre Easter story.

**Wall:** From your own personal story?

**Aycock:** A little bit. We had two rabbits, a white rabbit and a black rabbit. For some



reason chickens were put in the hutch with the rabbits. They were baby chickens and the rabbits began to lick the chickens. And just kept licking over and over in the same place. They didn't chew on them. They just licked them until they had licked away their skins and exposed their insides. It was a real agonizing, horrible thing. My father found the chickens. One of them was still alive. He killed it with a stone. And then, a few days later, the rabbits were found with their necks broken, and that's the story.

**Wall:** How old were you?

**Aycock:** I was about 10 or 11.

**Wall:** The *Rabbits Story House* obviously has symbolic meaning for you. What meaning does it have to the spectator?

**Aycock:** Well, the meaning of the rabbits story comes out in the *Shanty Town* project, where it made sense and had a reason for being. It wasn't told as a true story, but as follows: there were two people in *Shanty Town* and a crime had been committed. Each thought the other had did it, and they accused each other of the same crime. It is, in a certain way, the ultimate form of recrimination. Afterwards I picked up the story and used it as the basis of this little rabbit hutch-like structure for the Cranbrook project, which is a parody of the amusement park. So the rabbit story was simply a story that fit in. I'm carrying many stories in my head, transporting them from one place and using them in another.<sup>9</sup>

\*

About fifteen years ago I visited the house in which my great-great-grandparents Benjamin and Serena lived and where my great-grandfather Francis was born. It was a small wood-frame house. I climbed up alone into the attic where they slept and stood under the rafters. In the yard was the family cemetery. I remember the tombstone of Catherine, who died at age three. Years later, I dreamt that my brother Billy came for me and took me to that same wooden house set into the hills of Greece like a tholos tomb. I climbed the stairs again and behind a screen a young girl, whose face I could not see, lay dead.

'That thing is well-built,' my father who knows about those things told me. 'You could drive a truckload of elephants on that roof.'

I came home alone. There was no one around to work, so my mother helped me build it, *Low Building With Dirt Roof* (for Mary).

The building is located on a rise in the landscape so that from slightly below the entrance the earth mound of the roof forms an artificial horizon beyond which no other objects are visible. I wanted the obvious association — curve of the mound/curve of the earth.

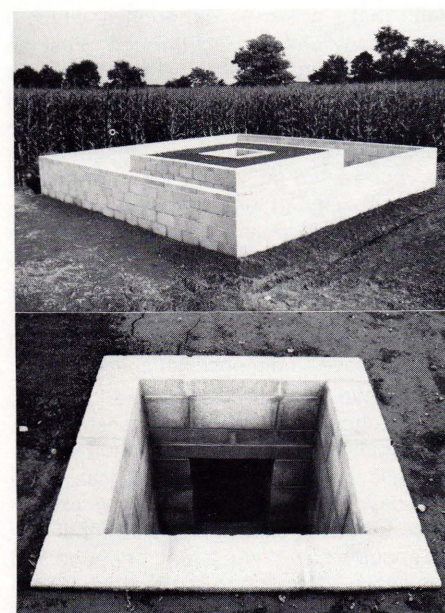
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*Walled Trench/Earth Platform/Center Pit*, executed July 1974 on the Gibney Farm near New Kingston, Pennsylvania. Three concentric quadrilateral concrete-block walls: a solid masonry wall 21'4" on a side x 3' high; a retaining wall 11'4" on a side x



Alice Aycock, *Low Building With Dirt Roof* (for Mary), 1973

Alice Aycock, *Walled Trench/Earth Platform/Center Pit*, 1974



4'4" high; and a center well or pit 4' on a side x 5' high; trench 52" wide x 4'4" high; tunnel 18" wide x 52" long x 30" high. With no point of entry, the outside wall presents a barrier. It is a tease, a lure, a trap.

Falling into a well.

A child falling into a well.

I remember stories about a child falling into a well.

Conflict arising from uncertainty has been identified as a major force in propelling the child towards the formation of logical structures.

Someone said the walled trench was both 'straightforward and mysterious.' I keep thinking of the response 'half terror/half love,' a simultaneous approach/withdrawal. One minute I want to reveal myself, the next minute I want to conceal myself. It just keeps wavering back and forth.<sup>10</sup>

When I was building the maze, a year before the *Low Building With Dirt Roof*, there were these kids who used to come around and use the maze. They had a secret hideaway out in back of the fields where I was working. They took me to see what they were building. It was the kind of thing built when they put stuff together: bits and pieces of things, old sections of wood, crates, cardboard boxes, and the like. The results often resemble what people in the Third World live in every day. Now that I come to think about it, it's an aspect that interests me a great deal. I'm sure the kids' constructions influenced *Dirt Roof*. I've already talked about this influence in project notes, referring to the crates I saw children push together like Spanky and Our Gang in a deserted lot landscaped with brick and broken bottles on Delancey Street in New York, and the heaps of burning garbage towards the outskirts of Cairo in which people have tunnelled rooms and which they pop in and out of like prairie dogs. It seems that about the same time as children are acquiring language they are also engaging in architecture construction. Architecture is also a language. Are the two interconnected? So from the child getting underneath the table and using the table cloth, is that a generic hut almost like the mud hut is generic for me, in the same way that tholos tombs are generic structures for everything? It would be curious if children make for themselves the same kinds of constructions. If I had just made the *Low Building With Dirt Roof* normal, it would have been nothing more than a re-creation. Whereas playing off the sensation of being claustrophobic, of either being pinned to the ground, or jammed up near the eave of the attic, justified its construction. Otherwise it would have been an anthropological exercise on a theme of sod houses or tholos tombs. It's the epistemology of house, or architecture, that interests me among other things.<sup>11</sup>

The width of the trench (52") is not physically difficult to jump. It is a psychological



gap. Being a person who takes few risks, I have jumped across only once. I stand on the ledge of the outside wall and imagine my body falling forward, my head cracking against the concrete. There is also the remote possibility that I may overreach the earth platform and land in the center pit. I therefore lower my body into the trench and then hoist myself up onto the earth platform.

I remember stories about a child falling into a well. Conflict arising from uncertainty has been identified as a major force in driving the child towards the formation of logical structures.

For myself as well as for everyone else, there have been hundreds of times when one either leaps across an obstacle, goes through it, goes around it, goes back the same way one came, or stands isolated and waits for help.<sup>12</sup>

Up, down, left, right, backwards, forwards — these are the six dimensions of space as defined by the writer Borges. These dimensions comprise a set of sensori-motor directions which the body must comprehend in order to orient itself in the world. These dimensions/directions are naturally operational during one's experience of the highway (one of my first works). They are also operational when one experiences architecture or more simply enclosed spaces. The most basic enclosure is the hut or wind-screen. The cellar and attic belong to the complex or fleshed out hut. They are the most non-functional aspects of the house. On a conventional or metaphorical level, up and down correspond to the cellar and the attic. From the cellar and the attic one can derive the four behavioral responses represented in the form of continua: from claustrophobia to claustrophilia, from acrophobia to acrophilia. On a more general level the continuum from phobia to philia can be seen as a movement from disorientation to orientation and back to disorientation. Now in the concept of the highway as labyrinth, one can already sense a disjunction between the set of directions and the ability of the perceiver to perform them. One literally loses one's sense of direction. In the pathological extremes of claustrophobia/philia and acrophobia/philia, there is also an extreme disjunction between ourselves and the world, at least the world as we know it, the world oriented to the cardinal points of the compass, the rising and the setting of the sun, and the center of the earth. This disjunction would not necessarily exist in a world without gravity, a world whose center was everywhere and circumference nowhere. But one does not have to invoke outer space and theories of the universe. There are, to say the least, those disjunctions in human perception, those times when there is no clear point of view, those moments when the world is out of joint, topsy-turvy, upside down. I remember an experience I had as a child in an amusement park. There was a long wooden barrel about 15' in diameter and 50' long

which revolved. People were supposed to walk through the center of the barrel while the barrel turned around them. Wall was continuously becoming floor, floor becoming wall and wall becoming ceiling. I went inside and I couldn't walk through it. I began to scream.

It seems to me that the disjunction, the uncertainty, the ambiguity that I experienced in the amusement park can be articulated. Using the conventional vocabulary or sign system of architecture — doors, walls, roofs, ladders, floors, chimneys, shafts, wells, platforms, — as a set of directions for a performance (as a structure for an event), it is possible to create a vocabulary of disjunction. This vocabulary of disjunction is in the tradition of Bosch, Piranesi, Boullée, Ledoux, Lequeu, Smithson and many others.<sup>13</sup>

**Wall:** Give me one more 'worn out story' of great importance.

**Aycock:** The one story I have had to tell continuously, and I feel somewhat sheepish saying it again, was that my father was in the construction business. When I was very young he was just getting involved in the business. All children draw, crayon, paint, draw houses, trees. But what was particularly important to me was that while he would be involved with his drawings at night, I would sit there and mimic him. He would be drawing. I would just sit there, and draw houses. That's what I started doing when I was very young. It's significant also in the context to the extent that I am involved with architecture, the reasons are not just personal. There are definite structural and conceptual bases behind all this. So anyway, I would sit there and watch him, I guess I was four or five at the time. He was making a model of a house. And I watched him build it every night. Then the house was built. It was the house that I went to live in for the next... well, it's still my home. I remember he gave me the model to play with, then I went and lived in the actual full scale house.

**Wall:** That's a terrific experience which I doubt many children go through. First an idea unfolds in two-dimensional space, as a drawn image, then in three-dimensional space at two scales — miniaturized toy scale then large live-in scale. Just imagine how the young mind must have been stretched in its capacity to understand by visualizing this transformation. Add to this the verbal process taking place before and during the drawing of the plans, and finally after it was all done, and it becomes quite a picture of how the mind operates from literary space to dimensional space.

**Aycock:** We would also go to the job sites. So I watched the house under construction, watched models under construction, watched plans under construction. Those were everyday, mundane kinds of daily experiences for me. I learned very early that you can imagine something even very huge and then cause it to come to be, to make it happen.

**Wall:** If I were to ask you what is the single, most critical sustaining source from childhood that continuously nourishes your adult art, what would you say?

**Aycock:** I've talked a lot about different things, but I think if we honed-in on it, I would have to say those events which exude a sense of mystery. Oh, I know there were very logical answers to all the stories I have recounted at one time or another. But they nonetheless retain their sense of mystery, even now. Another thing that happened, and I've never told this before, concerned the basement in the first house where we lived. The basement hadn't been completed when we moved in. There were chairs and things down there. My high chair was down there. I used to play in the basement all the time. Then one day it was finished and all panelled. When I went down, my chair was gone. I never saw it again.

**Wall:** Before the basement was finished, what was it constructed from?

**Aycock:** Concrete block. Then it was panelled in wood. Typical stuff.

**Wall:** Was it wet and damp down there? Was it dark?

**Aycock:** It was dark.

**Wall:** Unfinished?

**Aycock:** Unfinished.

**Wall:** How would you describe the Williams College project?

**Aycock:** The second mud or dirt house? The Williams College project was concrete blocks with a timber roof and it is a mud house. Completely the closest thing to the basement experience. And to the tomb. And the bunker. All these things.

**Wall:** And your high chair was gone...

**Aycock:** It was gone. I thought it had been walled up. I never thought it had been removed or simply thrown out. I thought it was walled up. So these are the kinds of experiences I remember most from childhood.<sup>14</sup>

#### Gordon Matta-Clark

**Matta-Clark:** It's very hard for me to reconstruct childhood in myself.

**Wall:** How about adolescence?

**Matta-Clark:** Let's just say that the one thing I recall most about growing up was the very strenuous attempt at growing up, at becoming competent. But the harder I tried to become competent, the more evident it was that there was some de... there was some complete misunderstanding on my part, I mean, I seemed to be very capable, much more capable at doing things that were my own; certainly being more happy doing things that were my own than trying to do other people's chores, tasks.

**Wall:** You mentioned on a few occasions that your education at Cornell's School of Architecture were atrocious. A lot of these preoccupations you exhibit have had to come from somewhere. Either it's all very recent or...

**Matta-Clark:** I remember I used to design fantastic little places for people to live in.





Alice Aycock, *House From Venice*, 1978

**Wall:** When, at Cornell?

**Matta-Clark:** No, in second grade, third grade. I used to design little houses for people. Those are the presents I would give to people, would be a house or a space. I was very actively involved in designing different sorts of living environments for people, like girlfriends, just friends, for myself. And much more actively involved in thinking of living conditions which were much 'further out' than anything I ever designed when I went to school. Really strange things. Houses that could be flooded for part of the year and you couldn't use them, they would just be sitting there, in the middle of water.

**Wall:** Who would you have flooded a house for? Yourself?

**Matta-Clark:** Sometimes it would be me... it depends on whether I was more fixated on someone else rather than myself. But it became definitely a kind of giving process. As a giving process, it is far more full of energy than when it became a design process. And I never felt like giving my professors anything. I'm just obviously very resistant to any kind of authority at any level. 'Where it all came from'... my feeling was of a very intense sense of constantly making spaces for myself. Constantly. Whether it was under a table or whatever. Those kinds of situations that children do, especially in the city where the one great vocabulary is not the great outdoors. It's the great indoors.

**Wall:** Was your father with you (in New York) at the time?

**Matta-Clark:** Not much, no. For a while he was in New York. Then he left for Europe in the 50's, early 50's. And the... I mean, that's the whole thing. It seems to me that, well, a lot of it had to do with a sense of being containerized and alternatives to that.

**Wall:** To getting out?

**Matta-Clark:** Kinds of getting out, yes. Ways of getting out, I suppose. I don't know if I've talked to you about this, but I used to have a fantasy, and it's still an idea that I have. It seems I was living in a meat market. There was a street. It started filling up with trucks and sounds of people clattering around butchered meat, slaughtered and butchered meat, from 6:00 in the morning. Sometimes it started as early as 3:00 a.m. And I was living on the corner. A very active, busy corner, and I felt so oppressed by the fullness and the activity of the street, the noise, and the thoughts of all that thoroughfare going on that I used to dream and think and speculate to a great extent about the space that existed between the wall I was backed up against and the other buildings in the block. There was a space between the walls that seemed it could be adequate for me to escape (into). It was obviously an illusion, a totally fantasy space, but the thing is that I kept on thinking that, maybe, there was an unopened door in that wall that would give me at least so many **more** layers of distance between



me and the street that I was feeling very exhausted about...

**Wall:** How old were you? Very young?

**Matta-Clark:** Oh no.

**Wall:** Recent?

**Matta-Clark:** Sure. In the past five years. It wasn't a childhood fantasy at all. It was a very real adult one and (one) that went on. And of course when it wasn't a reality, a real dream... I guess... there is a difference between sleeping dreams and daylight fantasies. What it was is that in the daytime I was trying to think of a way that I could rent a number of spaces in the backs of buildings that were more or less on the same level with mine, then actually boring through them, to get away from the space that I had.

That's the idea. There were those spaces that were just behind the wall, just somehow on the other side, of barriers that were necessary to get away to, where there was...

**Wall:** When you cut through entire buildings, or just remove segments of floors and walls, do you wonder beforehand what the spaces will be like? Have you ever been disappointed in the results of the cuttings?

**Matta-Clark:** The thing that interests me is to make a gesture (removal) which in a very simple way complicates the visual area I'm working in. The cut, looking through the cut, or looking at the cut, should create a sense of space that is clearly new. But also, trying very closely to describe a physical part of the total building, of total space.

In one case I cut through the end of a hallway without thinking what it would be like in the floor below. At one level I was cutting where I wanted, which was an intersection of two doors divided at the end of a hall. Below it (the cutting) was just in the middle of the ceiling, in a non-descript position. So I thought that was unsatisfactory because it didn't seem to correlate. (Yet) it made an interesting kind of thing from the floor below; you could look up and, all of a sudden, there was this very elaborate intersection of spaces in the middle of an otherwise open room... which I like. I'm not completely against the one-sidedness of this. I think I would have been much more satisfied if I had somehow found... I guess I work similarly to the way gourmets hunt for truffles. I mean — a truffle is this fantastic thing buried somewhere in the ground, the hearts of a great many growing all over the place. Very fleshy, esteemed as a prize food. So what I try to find is a subterranean kernel, kernel of a spatial idea in each case. Sometimes I find it, sometimes I don't. The thing is not to worry about any 'definitions'; just go ahead, and that's why I'm more interested in the action than I am in the statement. I do feel liberated when I do it. I don't feel so excited about it...

**Wall:** Afterwards?

**Matta-Clark:** Yeah, when it becomes an image. In some ways I see the need to create a situation which has visible clarity to it but at the same time what really excites me is the doing, the undoing.

There is a big difference between just

making an impressionistic indication of what you want to do, and clarifying. The act of cutting through from one space to another produces a certain complexity involving depth perception. Aspects of stratification probably interest me more than the unexpected views which are generated by the removals — not the surface, but the thin edge, the severed surface that reveals the autobiographical process of its making. There is a kind of complexity which comes from taking an otherwise completely normal, conventional, albeit anonymous situation and redefining it, retranslating it into overlapping and multiple readings of conditions past and present. Each building generates its own unique situation.

The *Datum Cuts*, for example, took place in an engineer's drafting rooms and offices. I couldn't deal with the outside because there wasn't enough exterior enclosure to really penetrate anything. What fascinated me was the interior central plan. The engineers took a small, square, primitive hut shape and divided it in half to make one big drafting room. They divided the other half into a quarter which became the office, and divided the remaining quarter in half again for the coatroom and bathroom. And then divided that again to make a shower or something. Everything was progressively divided so that the remaining last piece was 1/32 of the whole. I used the idea of division around the center. Therefore, I removed a square section out of the roof apex, then projected that cut from the roof down into the building and spread it out laterally through the walls and doors. The walls in Italy are fascinating because they hold a good fine chisel line without falling apart.

The *Niagara Falls* was quite different. It involved a subtraction game. Each of the removed pieces is one-ninth of the total facade, randomly taken out. I would have preferred a sequential removal.

I'm perfectly willing to dissolve as many of the given confining barriers as I see fit or necessary. It's just that there is no perfect space for me. There is so much stuff that's built to deny entry, to deny passage, to deny participation... yet my life energies and enthusiasms (are) about **not** being denied, about not being allowed to be denied, in working on going beyond that simple barrier. We would all be still living in towers and castles if we hadn't broken down some of our social and cultural inhibitions.

*Double Doors* was okay from one point of view, but from another it didn't make sense. So I did another piece in the same building. I made a hole by cutting out the bottom of a closet. The closet was the container for the piece in the same way as the piece was the whole closet. (i.e. when seen from its vantage points: the one, standing at the door of the closet looking down through the hole — in this case the closet contains the hole. The second, standing in the room below and looking up into the closet — in this case the hole contains the closet.)

**Wall:** There's a strong image forming in my mind. It has to do with doll houses. With the peeling away of barriers. Removal of sides...

**Matta-Clark:** Now we are getting very personal. Actually, the first birthday present I can remember insisting on and getting, is a doll house.

I wanted to be a voyeur ever since I was four years old. That's when I got the doll house. The thing about the doll house is it's not so much being a voyeur as being in control.

Someone said they thought the piece up in Niagara Falls is like a rape; the most anti-feminist thing that anyone could do, the building, all those parts covered up, and, well, closed, (and) to go in there and strip the building bare of its walls...

**Wall:** Is there anything sexual in all this?

**Matta-Clark:** Yeah. The thing that is most sexual about voyeurism is the thing that is most sexual about sex, to some degree; (there) is as much anticipation as there is gratification.

**Wall:** The feminist movement will make a great deal out of what you are doing.

**Matta-Clark:** Oh, of course, sure... a field day with it... but that's... I'm perfectly willing to admit to the, you know, it isn't the same...

**Wall:** Are you a political activist in that sense?

**Matta-Clark:** No, I've only...

**Wall:** Are you a voyeur into political activism?

**Matta-Clark:** Yes. I'm a political voyeur. That's very well put.

I'm fascinated. I'm fascinated by it (activism). It's an incredible energy. It frightens me a great deal because I don't feel I can embody that kind of spirit. I think it also isn't, in some ways, a very... a very real possibility in this century to come.

**Wall:** This may seem like a strange question, but do you love your fellow man?

**Matta-Clark:** Of course I love, I love everybody that I know well. I don't love things abstractly. I get to love things (to the degree) I get to know them, and the degree to which I'm able, or willing, to deal with it (is) I guess, one of those measures.

I wouldn't make a blanket love proposition 'I love my fellow man'... I love all women over the age of thirteen; I love all girls under the age of ten... What I really love is what's couched under mother's skirts. I'm much more interested in that than I am interested in how well it sets on a pedestal.

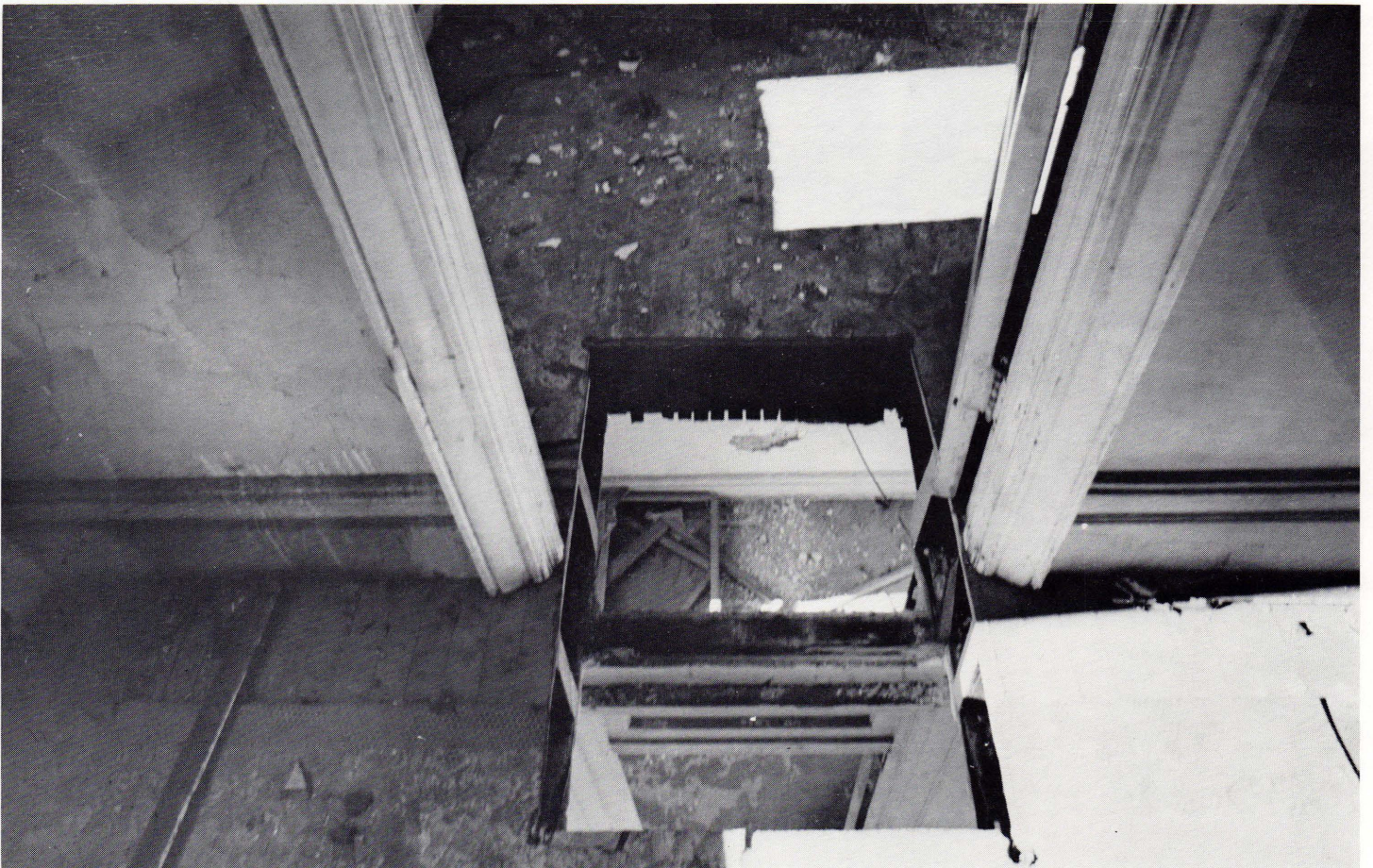
**Wall:** This explains your removal pieces, doesn't it.

**Matta-Clark:** Yes. I don't mind dealing with things in their own place and in their own terms. I would much sooner do that than try to make a proposition (concerning) the ideal figures, or whatever 'it' is. That's why Insley and I are so different: Insley doesn't mind idealizing a situation. He thinks clearly within it. I don't think very clearly within it. Even if I wanted to deal with it, I don't convince myself. I'd much sooner use a jack hammer.<sup>15</sup>



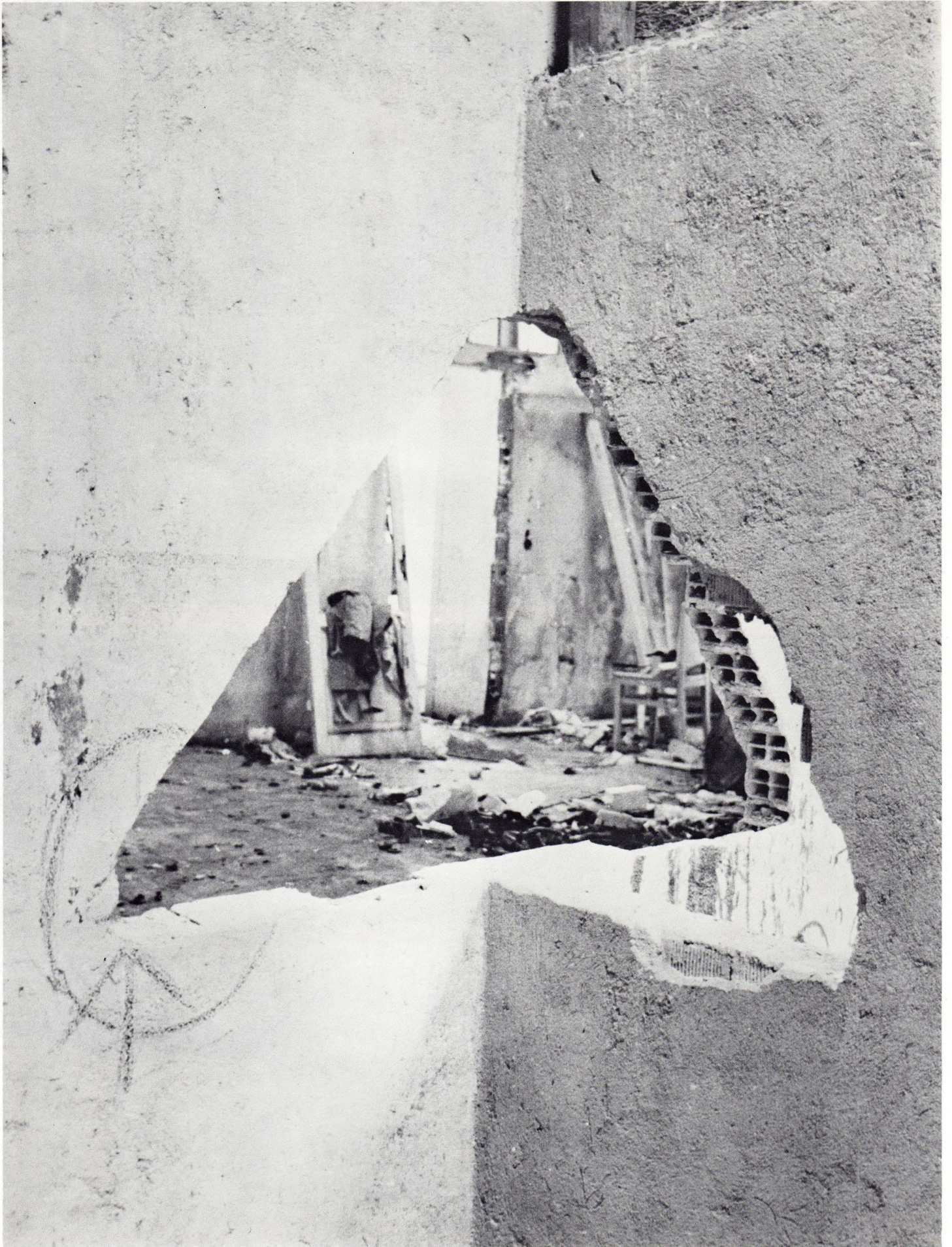


*Gordon Matta-Clark, Threshold, 1972*



*Gordon Matta-Clark, Threshold, 1972*









Gordon Matta-Clark, *Splitting*, interior view, 1974



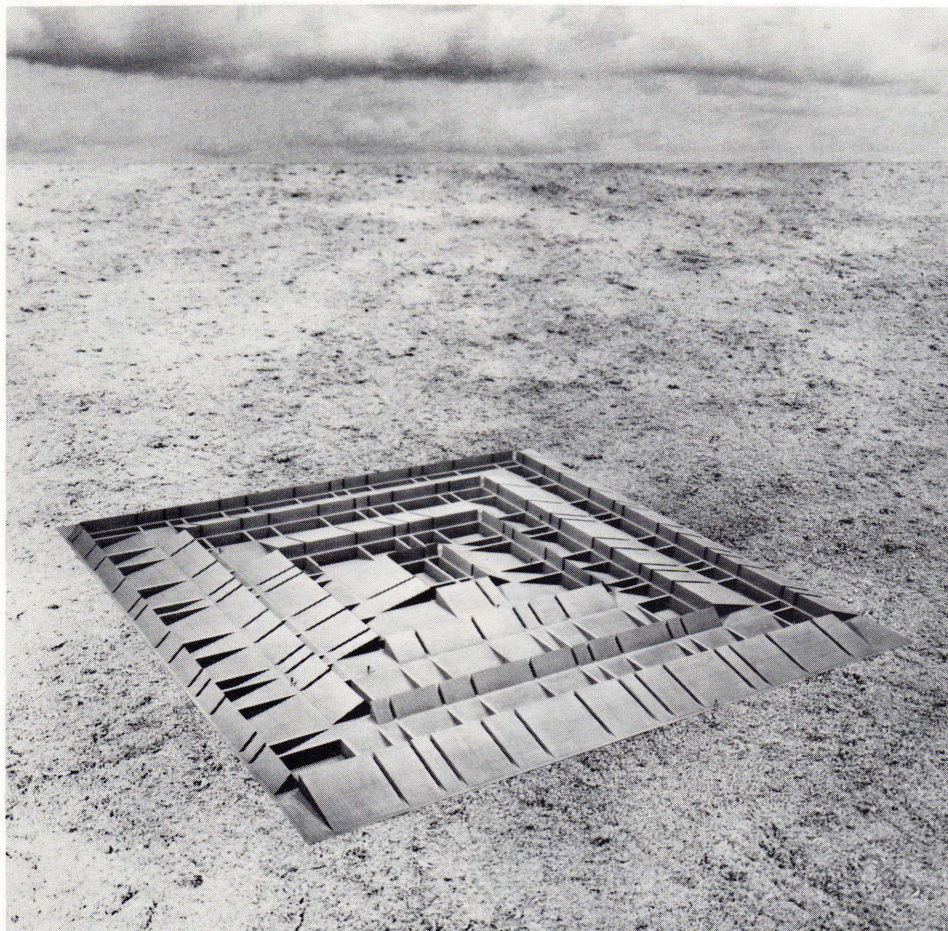


*Will Insley, Volume Space II, 1970*





Will Insley, *Passage Space Spiral, Interiorview, 1970*



Will Insley, *Passage Space Spiral, 1970*

**Insley:** My boyhood was spent in Indianapolis. I lived next to a big old house. The owners died and the house stood empty for several years. The grass grew waist high, the windows filmed with dust and the house slept on a hill removed from the road. The temptation to investigate was irresistible. One summer night, my friends and I resolved a plan in my back yard tent. We proceeded from the tent to the wooded road by moonlight and crawled through the grass and up the hill to the porch of the house. We broke the window glass with a BB gun and lifted the latch with a coat hanger. We entered the forbidden space and, room by room, cellar to attic, stole its dusty dreams. A neighborhood kid was witness to our deed and snitched — and we were properly punished. My friends and I committed one other such crime. This time, the empty house was new and we sneaked in during the day. I was curious about the inside of a 'modern' house and enchanted by glass block windows projecting sunlight checkers on the floor. We didn't get caught.

I went away to college in Massachusetts. By accident, I discovered the entrance to an underground labyrinth of tunnels carrying pipes from the central heating plant to all the campus buildings. One night, new accomplices and I lifted the manhole cover of the secret entrance, climbed down inside — and stole the space tunnel by tunnel.

After leaving school, and then the army, I moved to New York City. I continued my activities, but now always worked alone. I prowled the streets at night, looking for spaces, and discovered how much there was just lying around, open, but ignored. One summer night, I marched the entire length of Park Avenue, accompanied only by the roar of a million air conditioners, and stole the avenue. One winter night, under cover of blizzard, I stole the lower half of Central Park. Empty parking lots and playgrounds trapped inside cyclone fences were always tempting, particularly when wet with rain. The black asphalt shimmered and I sank through the diagrammed mirror surface to steal illusory spaces below. One late night, I went to catch the subway at Grand Central. The first door I tried was locked, but the second one was open. I entered and went down the ramp leading from the street to the subway. No one was about and the doors to the subway proper were locked, but the doors from the ramp into Grand Central Station itself were open. I had not realized that the station was locked away from the practical world at night, but such was the case. Quite accidentally, I had found one door left open by mistake. Instinct prevailed and I stole the vaulted waiting room of Grand Central Station. I got caught.

In recent years, my criminal activities in the available practical world have virtually come to a halt and I lead, to all outward appearances, a model life.

For over ten years, my attentions have



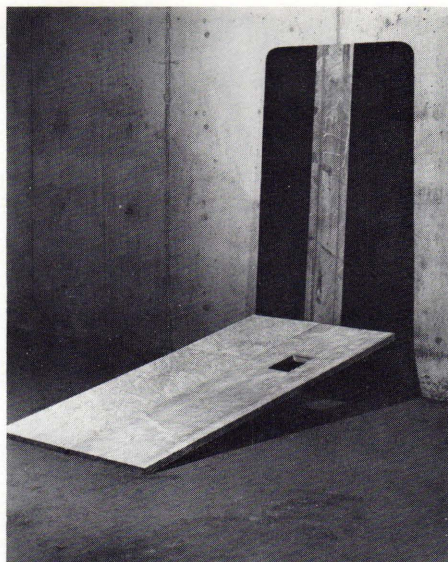
turned to spaces whose sources are unavailable to the practical world under normal circumstances. Hidden in the mind are memories of spaces located in some other time. The mind has an architectural structure of its own and I have come to know it as the Interior Building.

There are various ways of entering the Field and thus the Interior Building, but the predominant one is through cracks in the material structure of the practical world.<sup>16</sup>

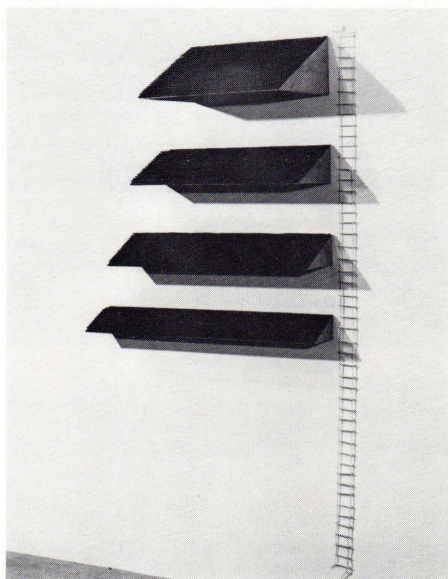
### Dennis Oppenheim

**Oppenheim:** I can mention falling off a building when I was about 8 years old. Had I had more access to intellectualizing my experiences I would have recognized that something significantly structural was going on, even at that age. I remember the body sensation. I remember the spatial sensation. I remember the result. I identified with the volatile physical transaction resulting in breaking bones. I don't want to speculate extensively on this because when you're 8 years old, you're 8 and not 30. At 8 you don't have a labyrinth of metaphorical capabilities to lay on a work. Yet what I am suggesting is, as a childhood experience, falling was psychologically structural. Whether I realized this at the time or not doesn't make a difference; it provided the foundation for the adult works dealing with jumping and falling. There are many examples of childhood experiences which find their way into other uses for the artist, but this one of falling is interesting because of its inversionary method of approaching sculpture. A break, breaking, is generally something you do to things outside of yourself. To make this into a self-referential activity required considerable mental acrobatics to finally conjure it up artistically. And this is where childhood experiences and adult art separate. The act of immersion, the act of entrance, the thinking that has produced many of these works involving physical and sensory phenomenology, continues to be a rich area. I know it wouldn't be difficult to move this isolated experience of falling, of losing ground, of being pulled by gravity, to a Freudian sort of construct. But I don't think that's terribly correct, at least in my case.

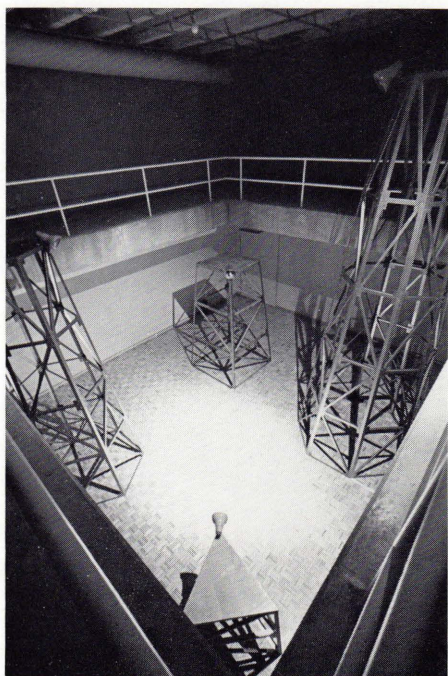
Works like *Treehouses for Poisoned Soil*, *Roof Top Jump*, *Stone Jump*, continue my interest in incorporating real hazard in performance situations where the danger is both latent and manifest, similar, for instance, to *Rocked Circle* where rocks are dropped on me in hopes that I can use the impending danger to elevate the aesthetic. This is a rather important point since it applies to some of the children's works as well (here Oppenheim is referring to *Playing Dead*, *Five Hour Slump*). These early activities employed risk and danger as aesthetic fuel to heighten the communication of the work. In *Treehouses* it's less direct. The treehouses exist in the form of proposals only and are two or three steps removed. Hopefully one will get built on a relatively true scale. If it did, then we would



Dennis Oppenheim, *Stone Jump*, 1979



Dennis Oppenheim, *Roof Top Jump*, 1978



Dennis Oppenheim, *Dayton Falls*, 1977

see the emergence of this other element, a kind of latent hysteria. The treehouses are interesting in the sense that they were conceived with the unconscious knowledge that the supporting structure is deteriorating, that they are, in fact, devices to recycle one's self, to enter into the soil again from their launching pads. I'm not sure they can be used, or if they are asking to be used, as much as other works like *Dayton Falls* where towers invite specific people, through loudspeakers and first names, to jump from the towers. Are the *Treehouses* asking similar things? I'm not certain. There is an implication of use but I'm uncertain if the purpose would be the same.<sup>17</sup>

### Harriet Feigenbaum

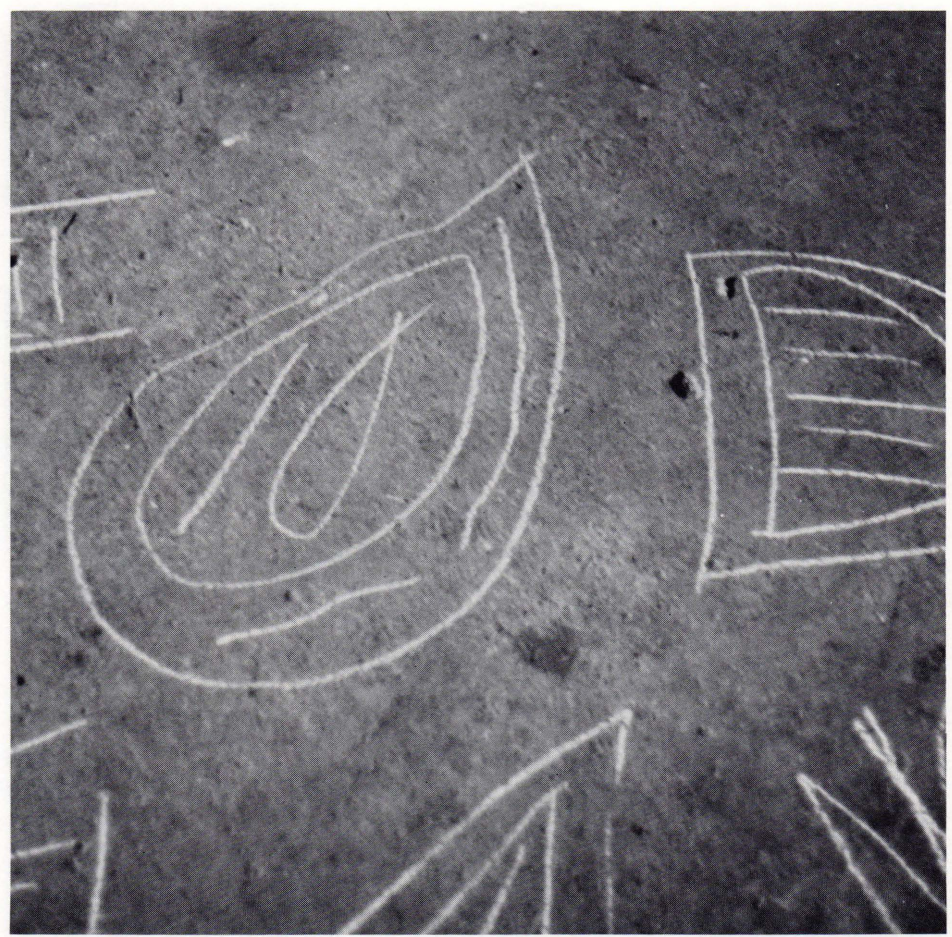
**Feigenbaum:** I built *Land Structures Where The Petroglyphs Are Made By Children, An Underground Installation* in my basement studio during the winter of '76-'77. The installation consisted of a walk-in domed corn crib flanked by two smaller domed out-buildings, set on a cement and earth floor, strewn with stumps, incised rocks and faded chalk drawings. The work was a prelude to the Artpark project *Cycle Series II*.

Amy Kaufman, then eight years old, was the first child invited to learn to incise stone. That is, to make petroglyphs. Though I had never seen an eight year old child carve stone, for some reason both Amy and I were confident she could do it. But before taking hammer and chisel in hand I thought she should loosen up, so I gave her some chalk and 1,400 square feet of cement floor. As Amy's language of geometric symbols spread over the floor, I remembered the time my twin brother and I covered our bedroom walls with pencil and crayon drawings. We were five. We went in for people rather than geometrics. Pre-abstraction? I remember even now the sense of freedom I felt when I realized that instead of making my 'moon faces' paper size, I could swing my whole arm and make huge circles. These drawn wall-works led to cheese-works... slices of Kraft's American Cheese stuck on the wall. I'm still bothered by the fact that mother didn't like it.

When my eyes drifted over Amy's floor drawings I noticed the same development: the symbols were becoming larger and more organized. She was prepared to work on a big scale. She should have had a piece of mountainside to carve instead of the pretty little marble rocks I got at a stoneyard in New Jersey.

*Cycle Series II — Land Structures Built Where the Petroglyphs Are Made By Children*, a 1977 installation at Artpark, Lewiston New York, revolved around the idea of a coincidental joining of two cultures: (1) Farmer's structures (represented by five octagonal domed buildings constructed of branches and wire) were built on land that may have been occupied by (2) a prehistoric people (represented by rock drawings designed and incised by local children). The idea was inspired by the way in which many of these carvings were actually discovered





Petroglyphs from Jordon burial cairn in Eritrea,  
(Photos: New York Public Library)

Harriet Feigenbaum, Land Structures Where the Petroglyphs Are Made By Children, An Underground Installation, 1976 floor drawings by Amy Kaufman





Harriet Feigenbaum, Cycle Series II — Land Structures Built Where the Petroglyphs Are Made By Children, 1977



Harriet Feigenbaum, Cycle Series II — Land Structures Built Where the Petroglyphs Are Made By Children, 1977

— by farmers while working their own land. The rocks and the buildings were not intended to be related to each other in any other way.

The piece was built to work on the hillside it occupied and no other. The formation of the hill suggested a triangle and the crest a natural skyline. Seen from below (the main view) the hillside tended to blot out its surroundings in a way that isolated the piece and evoked a sense of an earlier time.

Though the buildings were intended as corn cribs, the octagonal plan is reminiscent of such early buildings as baptisteries, temples and primitive dwellings. The cribs had to be seen from the interior as well as the exterior to fully appreciate the extent to which the twisted dome branches distorted their original formal plan — a symmetrical octagon sixteen feet in diameter. The domes from the interior were seen silhouetted against the sky as huge distorted spider webs.

The method of construction was basically primitive. The branches were tied solely with wire which became an integral part of the building design and a natural protective barbed wire. Structurally the octagons were a play on tripod construction without the use of triangular supports. The wall branches pulled the vertical supports in while the dome ribs pushed those same supports out. The walls and domes were held in place under tension yet could also stand independently. The domes were actually not attached to the walls at all. (A helicopter could have lifted intact all the domes off the buildings.)

The pile of rocks at the foot of the hill was formed in a totally contrived manner — by dumping from a front loader. They lay where they fell and broke. Local children were invited to carve their own designs into the rock. Aged between eight and thirteen years, using a mallet and flat chisel with varying degrees of skill, all of the children proved capable of executing their ideas. The results may be compared with petroglyphs and perhaps raise some questions as to who may have done most of this kind of carving in an earlier time.<sup>18</sup>

#### Elisa D'Arrigo

**D'Arrigo:** Most of the material I use for architectural modelling is ceramic. There are definite reasons for this which date way, way back to childhood.

But first let me say that I grew up in the Bronx. The Bronx isn't the most exciting place in the world. I never went away for summers, mostly staying in the city. Nearby was a park which, in reality, was a narrow strip of trees flanked by two immense roadways. That very thin strip of trees became a fantasy-land to me. I used to imagine that I was in a forest, an Indian going to collect berries and sticks and stones to make a teepee, make-believing that I had this exciting life when in fact it was boring. I spent a lot of time alone as a kid, or with my sister.



It was a very grey world, it was a very grey life because there wasn't much exciting visual stimulus. My parents had the kind of furniture you get in Sears Roebuck. No background history to it, no tactileness. Everything was always very new. I used to walk through the house and try to find something, anything, that seemed to come from another age, something ancient. Or when outside I would keep looking at the ground hoping to find a stone or pieces of pottery that would have markings on it, as if they came from another culture. I didn't find any. Then I would try to make them for myself and pretend that I had found them.

I was about five or six then. Kindergarten stuff. When I was seven I remember reading the comic book 'Dennis the Menace Goes to Mexico.' Dennis was looking at someone throwing a potter's wheel. From the comic book illustrations it looked easy: this thing was going round and round real fast and you just stuck in a finger and made these outrageous shapes.

I thought 'WOW,' that looks great. I would dream about turning my victrola into a potter's wheel simply by placing a piece of clay on the record. But it wasn't until college that I was able to work with clay. Yet since I had constructed elaborate fantasies dealing with clay ceramics, when I was finally able to use it, 'Kaboom,' it was MY material of expression.

My parents redid the whole house when I was six. The furniture had been mostly haphazard till then: hand-me-downs and junk like that. They decided to buy all new furniture and the one thing I vividly recall, even now, was going to Korvettes filled with rows of sofas that were all the same. I became car sick just standing there looking. Depressing. I had to live with the stuff. My only escape came from my grandmother's embroideries and a few hand-decorated objects.

When eleven, my parents and my sister and I went to Sicily to visit relatives. Coming from the Bronx, the light there was different. There was a starkness. A dryness. Getting off the plane and going to the little town where my aunt lived ended up in depression. Rows of buildings attached to each other, washed-out and drab. This is where I was going to stay for two weeks? Walking inside this horrible looking building, then everything started opening up. First came a spacious room, then an outside courtyard, then through a lemon grove surrounded by a stone wall, then through the heavy gate and suddenly you're on the beach! I felt that I was in a dream or movie-set come true, similar to the secret rooms in Nancy Drew mystery stories. The one recurring theme for me is the opening of a door and finding something you had no idea was there.

**Wall:** Do you see any relationship between your work and Joseph Cornell's?

**D'Arrigo:** I have been lately. Evidently he rarely left the west coast, or travelled that much. Yet his work makes all these references to exotic hotels in Europe. He must

have travelled to them in his mind. His works make my mind wander. Partly because he uses these wonderful little balls and chance elements that make me feel that I'm playing pinball only suddenly to wind up being on the Riviera. *Making the mind wander* is something I look to in my own works as well.

**Wall:** Cornell used the medium of the box. You don't. One of your mediums of information is the chair motif. Another is the rock or stone-like object, then finally the hairs which resemble spears. All of these are subjected to hand-made marking. At which point does the imaginary enter the surreal?

**D'Arrigo:** In the synthesis. I know what a chair is. I know what a landscape is. I know what a beach scene is, and I know what it's like to be on the beach. But to combine two unlikely objects like a chair and a beach scene triggers something specifically un-specific: it makes the mind, or memory, wander. I'm not making chairs at all.

**Wall:** Surrealism impaled memory, impaled imagination, to co-exist at a certain designated spot in depicted time and space as the artist's.

**D'Arrigo:** My work is more akin to daydreaming. You look at something only to realize that you are seeing something else.

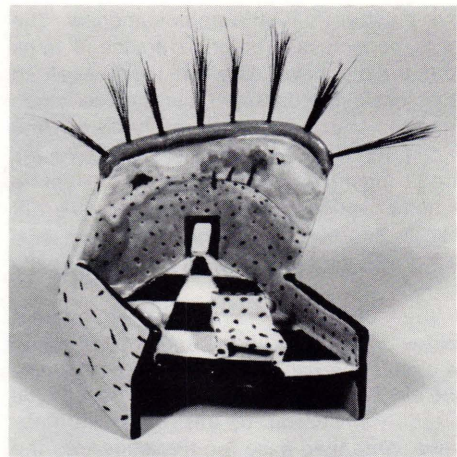
**Wall:** Almost every kid has collected rocks at one time or another. Is that the origin of those misshapen blobs which figure so largely in your work?

**D'Arrigo:** Yes. But they are not really rocks. They are too perfect. Maybe like the rocks or stones worn smooth by the ocean. They are somewhat amorphous, also very egg-like. And the sticks are opposites. Sticks and stones are elemental building materials. When you have to build from what's around, it's sticks and stones. In a way my rooms are pre-buildings because they are not being used. They imply use. They exist as potential use rather than actual use. Or being in the stage of collected.

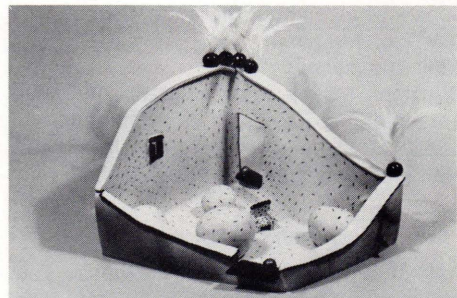
When you think of a chair you always think of a person. You think that someone was sitting there, or that someone will sit on it. It implies use. It implies the existence of another human being or person. An empty chair doesn't suggest isolation or abandonment as much as it does imply an existence **there**. It implies the existence of humans.

**Wall:** Yet there seems to be a contrast between the chairs that invite the presence of the human and the architecture rooms which, since many are studded with nails and pegs, with sprouts of hairs sticking out from ceramic spheres, liberally dosed with abrupt markings that cover surfaces like fungus, may suggest the presence of the fetish.

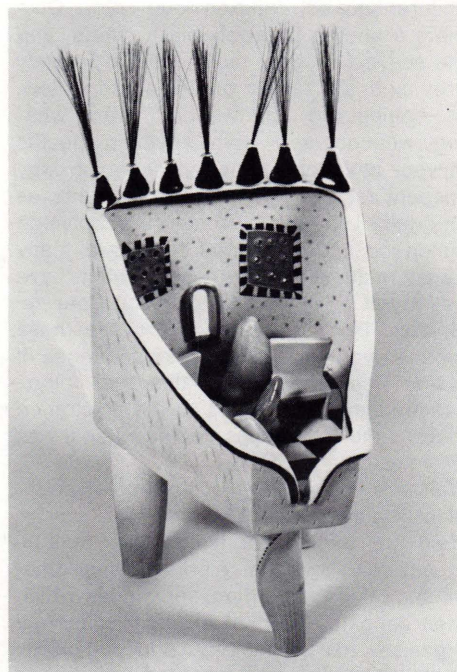
**D'Arrigo:** Nails become visually soft when seen in great masses. Anyway, the points aren't up. The heads are. The pegs are soft in outline though rigid. They function like a porcupine's quills, forming an impenetrable barrier. The pegs allow the architecture to become a fortress because the



Elisa D'Arrigo, *Fantasy Chair*, 1977



Elisa D'Arrigo, *White Interior*, 1977



Elisa D'Arrigo, *Pin-Ball Room*, 1977



eye must get past the pegs somehow. The pegs become a protection device. I think that people have different sides even to their basic personality. I have a side which tends to shut people out if I need to. And I can let down the barriers. The rooms aren't 'pushovers.' They are there, yet in a self-contained, open way. They are not overly aggressive yet they aren't passive either. That's how a lot of my work really is.

The nails, pins, hairs, pegs are appendages. First you have the solid object. Then you have the appendages. Finally you have the air. The appendages are the transitional elements, similar to antennae animals have. Antennae ease the transition into the air. They soften the architectural image, somehow.

**Wall:** Otherwise the envisioned room becomes what, without the appendages?

**D'Arrigo:** Too harsh...

**Wall:** Too isolated?

**D'Arrigo:** Maybe too isolated. Antennae are detecting devices that enable you to feel around, make the edges less hard, make the object more approachable.<sup>19</sup>

#### John Hejduk

**Wall:** Before we talk about the house you designed for your daughter Renata, let's see if there is anything in childhood, your own childhood, which may have conditioned how you think as an adult. And let's put this in a specific context: you are among the first to rely on color-form as an integral component to architectonic clarity and meaning. At a time when many architects of established reputation were immersed in the 'white-wash' school of expression, Hejduk alone stood out in use of color. With, I might add, a certain catholicism, since the range of color ran the gamut from De Stijl primaries to Rococo pastels. This at once joins and separates from what children do. All children love color. Give them a choice between black, white, and the suavest of grey mixes, like a purplely grey, and, say, acidic green, putrid yellow, fire-engine red, and we both know what they will choose. Is there anything specific in your childhood experiences which may account for this reliance on color-form as an adult? I say this assuming that between childhood and adulthood there are many transformational experiences which have nothing at all to do with childhood per se.

**Hejduk:** That's interesting. You see these models over here (pointing to a sequence of planar houses). I can match the colors, exactly match the colors to the illustration plates I did for Aesop's Fables when I was 17 years old.

**Wall:** Are you saying that your color prejudices remain constant?

**Hejduk:** I think color **images** are built-in. I really do believe that. A person sees something, or does something, early in life which then become a part of a person's internal organism, his psychology. And you never know when it's going to pop out again, as

it has so often in my case.

The last time we were talking you had asked a similar question about childhood origins in my work and once again a similar response pops up in me without me even wanting it to. I was five years old. In kindergarten. Our teacher gave each one of us an apple juice jar. She also gave us each a jar of enamel paint. Brilliant blue paint and a pure yellow. Boy! I remember this so vividly. First she said paint the jar with one of the colors. I painted mine all blue. Others painted their's yellow. When it dries, she said, now take the other color and just run the brush around the rim and let it drip. I couldn't believe what happened. A running down of yellow rivulets over the blue. The vibrancy of that image has **stuck**. I mean really stuck. It had great visual clarity.

**Wall:** Yet you do not allow paint to express viscosity in your adult architecture. Obviously the correlation between childhood experience and adult ideology, or praxis, has been transmuted by other elements. We won't get into that now but leave it for the interviews with Ferrara where she will attempt to track out the various networks which underlie your creative biography. I hope you don't mind being a guinea pig for this new type of analytic approach to criticism.

**Hejduk:** No. Sounds like fun.

**Wall:** Let's go back to our first meeting. You had also mentioned a fascination with toy lead soldiers. Ever since then I've constructed this art-historical fable. On the one hand, your work has been criticized positively by various writers to represent a highly skilled commentary on Juan Gris' 1915 aesthetic dealing with the percepts of synthetic cubism. So now everyone runs around with this notion in their heads that Hejduk is extending synthetic cubism as he is adding new elements to that vocabulary. Yet in our first meeting you told me how much a love of order stems from playing with lead soldiers when a child. As a result I have this fantasy, which to me is delightful, that your highly controlled geometric architecture recapitulates what was going on when you sat at a table and lined up all those soldiers in various battle plans. So here on the one hand is a vast group of sagacious architectural historians deriving the origins of Hejduk's architecture from the rarified content of synthetic cubism, de Stijl and post-purist aesthetics, while in fact Hejduk's basic love of geometry, of color, of order alignments also stem from playing with toy soldiers.

**Hejduk:** I spent eons of hours and days with those British lead soldiers. They don't make them anymore. But they were made in the 30's. Handpainted with all the detail at 1/8" scale. The belts, the cuffs, everything. They were very very subtle. If you had African warriors, then even the shields were beautifully painted in brilliant enamelled colors. Very haptic. At that miniature scale one develops a tactile sense. And of course

there was the organization...one constantly organized them in lines of marching soldiers, in all sorts of geometric battle patterns. Then there was war. Everything would disperse in chaos. A lot of them would drop dead. Then you would put them all back up, but maybe this time in a different pattern.

**Wall:** Is it safe to say in your case, John, that there is a genealogical relationship between these early childhood experiences of geometrically ordering British lead toy soldiers and a subsequent desire to order architecture geometrically as an adult? And to go one step further, much like war always destroys the perfect marching order of the soldiers, or the presence of a stream or tree destroys the perfect order, or the onslaught of another geometry from the opposing army destroys the perfect order, do you conceive the 'function' in architecture as a destructive agent?

**Hejduk:** That's a nice fable. Not that I do that, because I don't. But I could assume that's a possibility.

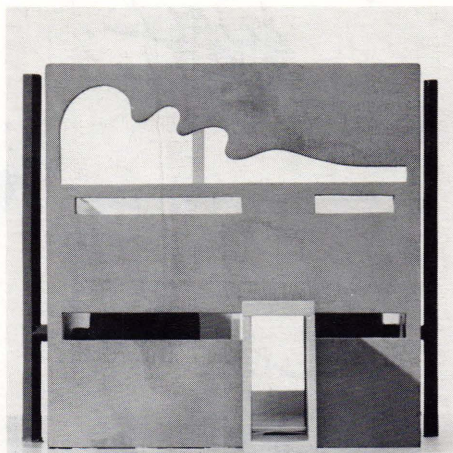
**Wall:** Let's say you don't **consciously** do that. I presume the Element House for your daughter will show a lot of these preferences for geometry-color.

You designed it in 1971-72 when Renata was seven years old. The house refers to Babar after the children's story of the same name, Babar being an elephant. Do you recall off-hand what prompted you to do something for your daughter?

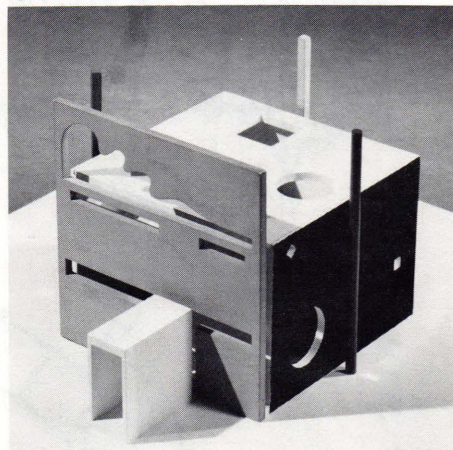
**Hejduk:** Sure. I wanted to do a little book where the basic architectural elements would be explained to a child in her age range. That was the motivating force: to do a little book, and to use a very minimal house as its vehicle. Of course this was deceptive because at the same time I was including all those architectural positions, theories, which one, as an adult, becomes involved with over the many years. But that's how it generated. Incidentally, I am carrying on a trans-atlantic conversation with Reima Pietila, a Swedish architect, and he made an interesting observation concerning this house. He said that he found the house to be more essentially functional than even those produced by the functionalist architects of the 1920's.

I'd never considered it in that way before, but he is absolutely right. The house is minimal in all its functions, shapes, colors and associations. The house measures 24'x24'x24'. Inside are only those essential elements needed for life. You have a fire for heat; water for ablutions; kitchen for cooking. These three basic elements are contained within a singular space with, of course, sunlight for seeing and growth, a door for entrance. Each of the essential elements (heat, ablutions, cooking) have their own geometry and color. Diamond for heat. Circle for ablutions. Square for cooking. Red for fire. Blue for water. Yellow for food and sunlight. It's symbolically ecological at a minimal level as well. The ventilating system is exposed on the ex-

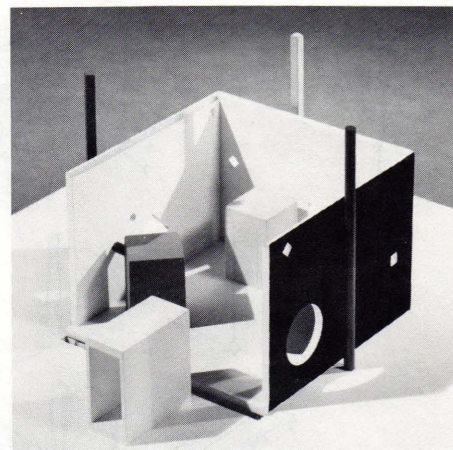




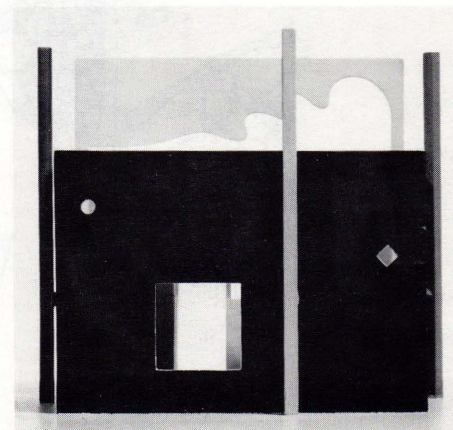
John Hejduk, *The Element House*, front facade, 1971



Exterior view



Interior view



Back view, (Photos: Armen Photographers)

terior. Since they originate from these three geometries, the ventings continue their parent shapes but on a reduced scale. It's minimal in scale also: big/small.

The house's overall color continues this minimal clarity: black on the outside, white on the inside. There are skylights, also in their proper geometry, over each of the three elements. Now what happens when the sunlight streams in, hits and bounces off these elements is this: the color begins to mix on the walls. Sometimes you would get, if the house were ever constructed, efflorescence of the primary colors: green, orange, purple, in varying intensities and washes depending on the amount of light, angle, time of day, and so forth. Sometimes all the colors would be well defined, sometimes one or another would take precedence. So basically the house has to do with reductions which then become complex.

Each facade has three holes in it, one large and two smaller. The larger corresponds to the element which is adjacent to that wall. For instance, the ablution cylinder is next to the wall where the largest hole is a circular shape, with the diamond and square being smaller. The cooking cube is next to the wall where the largest of the three cut-out geometric holes is a square, with the diamond and circle smaller. And so it goes from side to side, each side having a rearrangement of the holes but still kept within a single system of thought.

I'm also working with elemental numbers in addition to the shapes, colors and functions. One large aperture, two small apertures, three altogether. The house is a cube. Four sides. One. Two. Three. Four. What more can I tell you?

**Wall:** Books are generally narrative, especially books for children. The Element House is quite successful in telling a narrative, an architectural story, about how architecture gets to be the way it is at a primary level. It reminds me very much of El Lissitzky's book written in the twenties. That too was a primer of geometry in dynamic action. How did you arrive at that facade?

**Hejduk:** The front facade is a somewhat complex issue. Throughout my professional life I have been involved with two systems of thought, the one dealing with the cube and the other dealing with plane. So even within this small house for my daughter there is a theoretical argument going on between two opposing systems of thought. A slight argument. Not a very vicious argument, but an argument nonetheless. And the grey color of the facade is important. The plane has thinness that *is*, not just represents, the threshold over which one crosses in and out, in and out. The crossing is momentary. It's like going through any door, or over any sill: you go from one situation into another through a threshold, a membrane between two worlds, so to speak. That's why the facade is a plane, thin and colored grey. Of course, grey is a mixture of the black of the outside with the white of the inside.

**Wall:** Therefore, the entrance facade is an intermediate belonging to neither the outside nor the inside yet having a life of its own, but one, paradoxically, dependent on what it's thresholding into? A grey zone of determinate indeterminacy?

**Hejduk:** Yes, it's an intermediate term.

**Ferrara:** Can you clarify for me what you had just said about the argument between the two systems of thought? I'm not an architect so perhaps you won't mind.

**Hejduk:** Architecture is the only art where you are in a volumetric situation that is all encompassing. I could be a block away from this house on a hill and the only art that I could see is that thing as an object. Suppose you're moving around, coming closer, and as you approach the object it is coming in on you, no matter whatever perspective you're in, there is a moment, physically and mentally, where you go over the threshold and you're no longer outside the object. You are in it.

Now in painting, you are always the observer. You can mentally go into it, but you cannot physically go into it. Sculpture is the same way usually. It's an external thing. Very seldom can you go into it. But architecture *always* has the aspect of the observer or the voyeur externally, and then complete gestation. You become an element of an internal system of organisms.

**Ferrara:** If the threshold is an intermediate between two worlds — in looking at the object in perspective as planar images and being inside the object as an encompassing volume — is there any reason why the threshold is so neutral, so grey? Theoretically, thresholds could be conceived as planes of great anxiety, or great something-going-on because it may suggest a traumatic passage between two worlds.

**Hejduk:** To answer that I have to rely on an idea called 'the moment of the present'. In his book, *The Failing Distance*, Jay Fellows talks about the factor of looking into perspective, which is a diamond configuration flattened out with the point in the distance. So that at the moment of madness, the diamond configuration turns in upon the person internally. Well, that moment is the hypotenuse, which is the point of entry-exit, the threshold. The hypotenuse of the diamond-perspective is what I call the moment of the present which I suspect might also be considered the moment of my death. I can't tell you that because I haven't had that experience yet. But the hypotenuse of the perspective is constantly in motion and flattening as you approach any building from the exterior. It flattens out right on top of you at the moment of entry — the moment of the present. It is the quickest condition time-wise; also, it's at once the most extended, the most heightened, and at the same time the most neutral and repulsive.

**Ferrara:** In the light of these remarks, I'm sure you distinguish yourself from other American architects, or architecture in general, or even apart from a certain genre that may be going on now as a particular



function in time. What is the peculiar role this house plays in your work specifically and in the history of modern architecture?

**Hejduk:** I would say the house is becoming more and more pivotal for me. We are no longer in an age of optimism. We went through a period where there were only programs of optimism. Schools. Hospitals. Sunlight everywhere. Boundaries open up. Privacy was at a minimum. No bedrooms. No kitchens. Open space. No need to have privacy, because this was a very utopian, light-filled, optimistic view of the future. There wasn't a counterforce culturally in the same way as we had in the Middle Ages where the programs of pessimism existed to off-balance programs of optimism. Now we are entering into an architecture of pessimism. I don't take this as a negative condition at all. It's simply a necessary psychic state. There has to be an equilibrium, a balancing in order for both lines to be running in a parallel and productive way again, like the Middle Ages, where a simultaneity of conditions will provoke certain arguments not presently possible.

**Wall:** Do all the houses you have designed after this one for your daughter express an architecture of pessimism?

**Hejduk:** Yes. And that's why I consider the Element House so pivotal. The houses which come after are constantly compressing, constantly reductive. From 400 square feet, then, to 215 square feet. At the same time each element becomes isolated. This is what I call "American." *The House of the Inhabitant Who Refused to Participate* is a programmatic statement of an architecture of pessimism. Each function has its separate room. Human needs have been reduced to the minimal. There is a dining room table and chair. It has its own room. The Inhabitant leaves, goes out through the planar wall which stands behind all these rooms, down a corridor, through the planar wall again where there is a stove. It has a room all to itself. And so forth. Out again, in again, the sink. Then comes the refrigerator. Each element has its own cell, 6'x 6'x9'. Downstairs there is more of the same: a cell for the bed, a cell for the living room chair, an empty space, finally a cell, or room, for a study table. Then the next level down again, the same isolation of elements: a shower, bath, a john. Each within its own space. The house sits on a plaza. It's been designed for Venice. When the Inhabitant is in the empty room, he can look across to a tower. The tower is 6'x6'x72' high. There is a mirror on the tower situated directly opposite from the window of the empty room. When the Inhabitant stands in the room, he sees a reflection of himself. Yet any citizen can come into the plaza, enter the tower, go up the ladder and stand behind the mirror, which is a two way mirror, and observe the Inhabitant Who Wouldn't Participate. There's only one problem: any third citizen can come and crank down the door to the tower, while other citizens could sit around the plaza and watch, if they wanted to. This breaking

down into independent units, this getting of ambiguity through the complete isolation of elements is, I might say, the American phenomenon, whereas Europeans achieve ambiguity through interlocking elements.

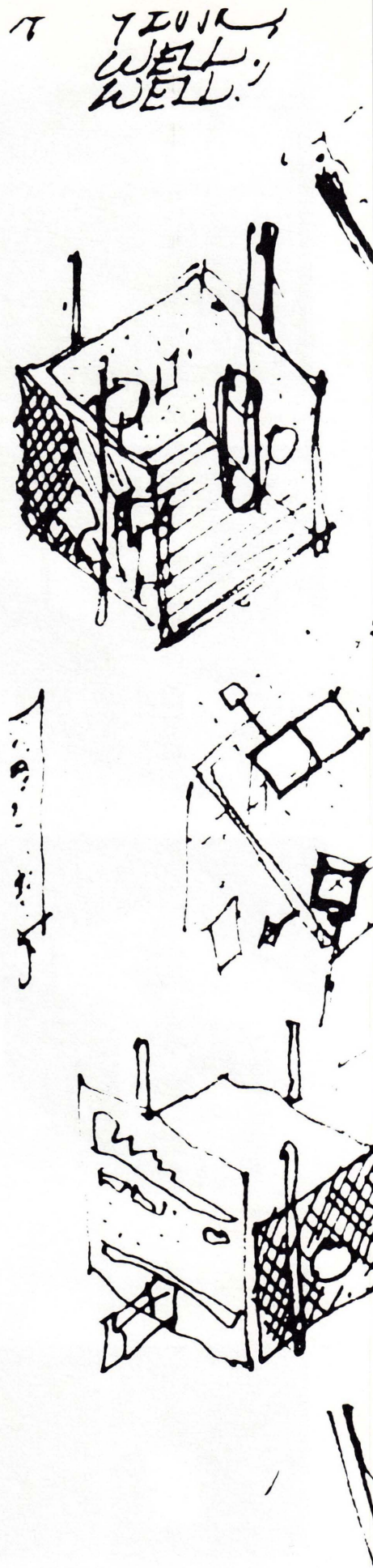
**Wall:** I presume you are referring to the interlocking profiles characteristic of Corbusier's and Ozenfant's Purist architecture and paintings, certainly of the work of Juan Gris. But how does this sense of isolationism relate to the house for your daughter? Except that the house also is unique in having each functional element carefully separated and articulated, but not in so extreme a manner, and by implication only. The ablution cylinder doesn't have a room of its own. All the functions share the same single space indicative of an architecture of optimism. The reflected colors washing on the wall would mix resulting in greens, oranges, and that's an intentional participation among formal elements on your part, John. While the various geometric shapes always remain discrete and independent, while their juxtapositions preserve autonomy as would be expected in an architecture of pessimism. Nonetheless, they share...participate...in the same aesthetic, the same formal action. If the Element House begins the arguments underlying an architecture of pessimism, the argument is not very violent, not very aggressive, just hinting at its presence as one might expect in a house for a six year old. One thing I would like clarified: how the hell did a children's story become a factor in all this?

**Hejduk:** There's one incredible drawing of the Babar story, a double page spread depicting day and night. The composition is diagonal. It shows a bunch of flying elephants — Babar being an elephant — and they have goodness and hope and optimism and all that written over them, beside them, underneath. That's on one side of the diagonal, the top side. Then there's a whole bunch of monsters on the bottom half. They are running away. It's captioned greed, jealousy, and so forth. I looked at that drawing many, many times. I read those stories to my daughter Renata many, many times. And what I slowly realized was that in the daytime, the animals were all **elephants**, and they all looked **alike**. At night, all the animals were different, monsters in this case, and none of them looked alike. It's really, when you come to analyze it, a phenomenological projection.

**Wall:** Societally phenomenological, democratically phenomenological in that the drawing says: Everything is okay as long as we look and act the same. That's the sunlight. The things that go bump in the night, the horror of darkness, arise from simply being **different**. What a great commentary on American values. Did you ever talk to your daughter about all this?

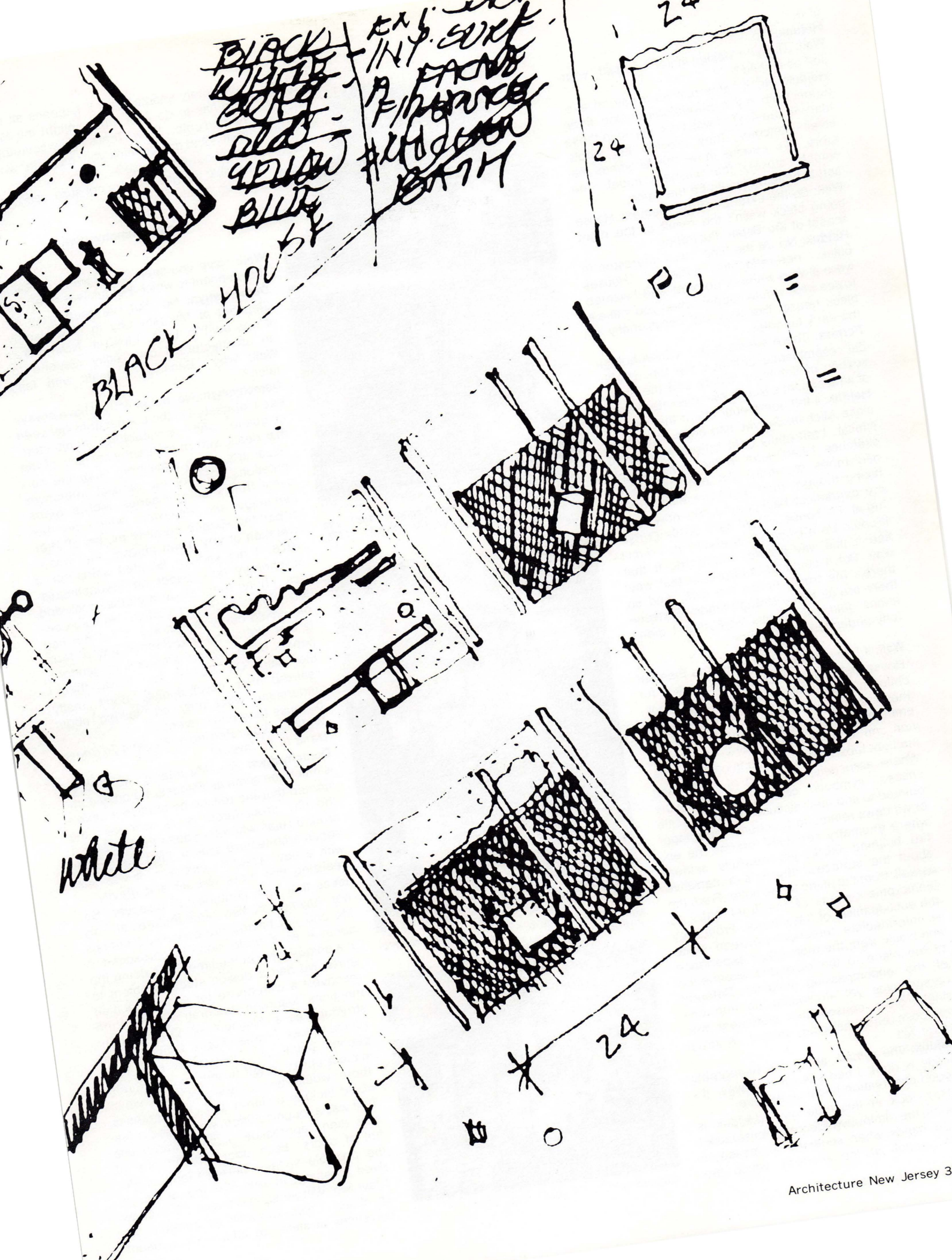
**Hejduk:** No.

**Wall:** So you designed a house for your daughter, as an architectural primer, but never found out what your client thought



John Hejduk, *The Element House*, sketches, 1971







of it.

**Hejduk:** No.

**Wall:** Did you design it for yourself, yourself as a child?

**Hejduk:** No It came just as a natural evolution from my methodologies. One thing leads to the next. It was crystallized in these small sketches. They provide the whole story. It's curious how the sketches resemble closely the finished model. The actual building would be the same.

**Wall:** So the exterior of the Element House being black wasn't the result of the night aspect of the Babar illustration.

**Hejduk:** No. At the time I was interested in black, non-reflective surfaces. Houses were always white or colored, and I wanted to see what would happen when you make a black house, like they did occasionally in the early colonies.

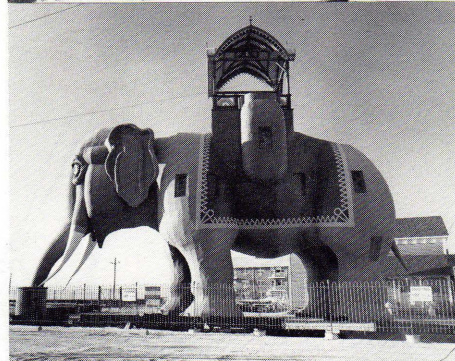
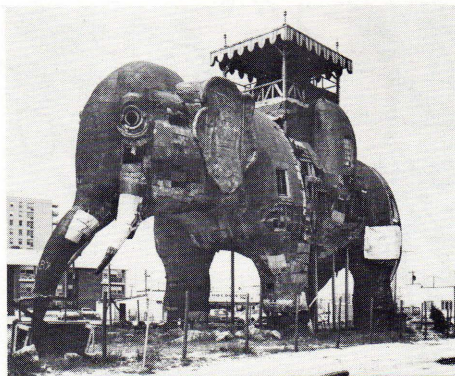
**Ferrara:** There seems to be a morphological resemblance between the top wriggly section of the front facade and the shape of an elephant's trunk. Was this intentional?

**Hejduk:** I felt some guilt about that section since Michael Graves had done something similar. I felt guilty until I discovered small sketches I had done in the sixties which had those elements. I'm not attuned to taking thought from someone else. That's my puritanical background. So now looking at the house... I just said 'Jesus Christ,' it could be a trunk of an elephant. I didn't see it this way before. I didn't do it that way. But it could be interpreted that way: there's the trunk, here's the ears. And so there are all these strange kinds of associations going on in this work that I didn't fully understand at the time.

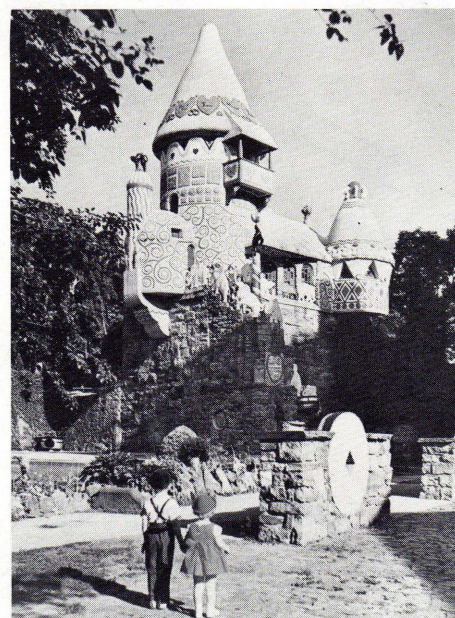
**Wall:** If I was going to look upon the Element House only as an architectural primer for children, as a three-dimensional text book, then I would say it's terrific. An A,B,C's of elemental shapes and colors in dynamic action. An environmental paint box where sunlight mixes the colorations on the walls. Where associative meaning of colors and shapes, symbols, could be ostensibly pointed to and then discussed. Where scale of windows relates to functional parentage, where geometry seriously informs the entire building fabric yet playfully skitters about the surfaces. There is a narrative as well: from the plane to the solid. From the biomorphic cutouts of the front entry to the euclideanism of the interior. From grey as intermediate threshold between white and black, from the momentary experience of the plane to the extended experience of the encompassing volume. Different perspectives yet all adding up into one single, clear, consolidated statement with no loose ends hanging around. A great narrative!

**Hejduk:** The remark about the biomorphic facade is right. I had seen it that way. It's a good observation because it's true.

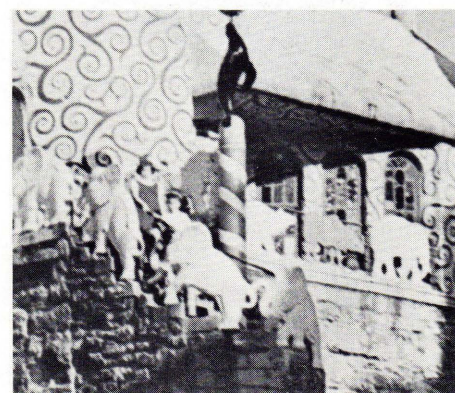
Hey, look at this little guy! (Hejduk is holding the diminutive Element House model in his hands when speaking: it measures 4"x4".) Look at the shadows which are



James Lafferty, *Lucy the Elephant*, 1881 and renovation by "Save Lucy Committee," 1976, Margate City, N.J.



*Gingerbread Castle*, designed by Joseph Urban for F.H. Bennett, Hamburg, 1930



*Gingerbread Castle*, detail

absolutely spectacular! It happens all over and has to do with how sunlight mixes reflected color. Wow! That's really something.

**Wall:** What do you think your daughter would say about this house?

**Hejduk:** (laughs) Oh, I'm not sure... she finds me an oddity.<sup>20</sup>

Helen Demchyshyn

**Wall:** Have you seen the drawing of Babar the elephant to which Hejduk was referring?

**Demchyshyn:** No. But I've seen *Lucy the Elephant* at Margate City in New Jersey. It was built in 1881. I love it. Now there's an architecture I can really respond to!

**Wall:** Why? Because it deals with fairy tales?

**Demchyshyn:** No, not exactly. I have always been interested in the connections between language and architecture...architecture that deals with photography...or any of the visual arts which stem from language permutations. One of my earliest influences came from reading Charles Morris' *Signs, Language and Behavior*, where he described the sixteen possible modes of interpretation of any given phrase. That was in 1976. I did sixteen labelled shirts for a psychology term paper on psycholinguistics. I hung them all on a clothes rack and left it in my professor's office. He said people would come in and say 'What the hell is that? When he told them it was a 'term paper' done by an architecture student, they said, 'Oh. No wonder.' It was then I realized that psychologists don't really understand what they are talking about because they don't invent.

**Wall:** Are you referring to Piaget's *To Understand Is To Invent*?

**Demchyshyn:** Yes. My interest in children is much the same as Piaget's. He once commented that the reason he studies a child's thought procedures is to discover the ground rules whereby adults think. When I began architecture school, I felt like a child with a new world to discover. It was like realizing that there was air and gravity — ideas that took centuries to discover. So, not having studied architecture all my life and not having pre-conceived notions about it as a profession, I approached it in a unique way. At the time I was doing the shirts, we had a design studio problem to reconvert a warehouse for some specified functions. Maureen Corcoran rehabbed the structure as a Museum of Deterioration. All the cracks, buckled floors, falling beams, peeling paint, etc., would be preserved in clear epoxy or left further to deteriorate. There would be a curatorial staff which would include children and octogenarians. That was a tough solution, which the professors didn't appreciate. I did a warehouse full of doors. Each door defined one of the possible sixteen permutations of derived meaning, in sets. On top of Morris I layered Wittgenstein's thesis, 'If I know an object I also know all its possible occurrences in states of affairs.' This meant



recollecting all the possible meanings from childhood on in order to complete a full knowledge of anything's possible 'states of affairs.' Using Alice in Wonderland doors just wasn't accepted as an architectural solution. I failed the course.

I got to the point where my personal views as an architect conflicted with Architects' views. And I was terribly confused. I didn't understand the word 'invention' or 'creation.' I didn't understand what architects were doing when they designed. Was it simply shovelling around already known elements? Or was it something else? So I started to correlate my own work with that of children, thinking that maybe the way children respond to certain sets of instructions might tell me something about designing.

**Wall:** Give me an example.

**Demchyshyn:** I guess Bruno Bettelheim's book *The Uses of Enchantment — The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* is a good place to start.

Bettelheim wrote that the gingerbread house is an image nobody forgets. There is a good example of it in New Jersey. F. H. Bennett decided to fulfill a life-long dream after seeing an opera production of 'Hansel and Gretel.' He had the designer of that production, Joseph Urban, create the Gingerbread Castle. Just goes to show. It was a theater production that inspired him and he commissioned a stage-set designer, not an architect. In any case, the gingerbread house is more important to more people, from childhood on, than Ronchamps, the Farnsworth House or Falling Water. Everybody lines up to see Lucy the Elephant and the Gingerbread Castle, but the Farnsworth House is not much of an attraction. I'm not just talking about entertainment. I'm talking about an architecture that people respond to more naturally than they do to the great architecture the profession upholds. I'm told I should revere the Farnsworth House, when I really respond to stage-set architecture of the kind I see in the *Wizard of Oz* and *Day of the Locust*.

According to Bettelheim, the gingerbread house's power rests in oral greediness. Children, and adults alike, wish to eat up the gingerbread house no matter what the dangers. The impulse to surrender to oral delight seems universal...even more than Corbusier's pure and secondary theory...and spontaneous. There is another aspect to Bettelheim's theory which led me back to the connection between language and visual design. He maintains that through fairy tale stories, the child learns to read his mind in the language of images, the language which helps understanding before intellectual maturity.

To find out a child's understanding of the gingerbread house I asked 4, 5 and 6 year olds at the Hoboken Day Care to draw their own illustrations of certain scenes in 'Hansel and Gretel.' The differences in the drawings showed an evolution of the image from the four year olds' conceptions to those of the sixes.

Still, the image didn't come very easily. When I read the story to them, they all seemed very delighted by the description of poor, lost Hansel and Gretel finding such a delicious looking house made of gingerbread in the middle of the lonely forest. The first drawing I had them do was of the house where the children lived with their parents — the house near the forest. They responded quickly. Usually the house was the stereotypical house image with one tree enough to represent an entire forest. I asked one five year old how many trees are in a forest. Right away he decided there were exactly 17 and went on to draw 39 of them!

But something curious happened when I asked them to draw the gingerbread house. They wouldn't draw. I read the scene to them again and urged them to try, but they said they didn't know how. It occurred to me that perhaps the term gingerbread was the problem — it isn't a common food. I asked what their favorite food was. Candy! So I asked them to draw a candy house. To this they responded, but very cautiously. If we hadn't changed the term, there wouldn't have been any drawings of the image 'nobody forgets.'

This is an important point to consider. Bettelheim feels that one of the great values of fairy tales is that they are far removed from everyday experiences. He says this, 'The fairy tale's concern is not useful information about the external world, but the inner process taking place in the individual.'

But children at that age are still very dependent on actual, physically experienced knowledge of their environment. If fairy tales center around objects or events that are so far removed that they are not experience-able for the child, these images may be inaccessible. And the meaning would then be lost.

But I don't believe fantasy leaves behind the 'here and now.' It gives objects new forms based on real, actually experienced forms. Fantasy images are based on real images. To understand them involves an important process of concept transfer. By abstracting properties and functions of objects and applying them to new situations, the child can master the world far beyond the one immediately at hand.

The psychologist Jerome Bruner states that the child's first concepts are functional. In other words, the object is known through one's actions on it. Candy is lickable, eatable; it can be picked up, held and put in your mouth. A house, on the other hand, is enterable; it's an object to be in, walk around in, live in. As a total form it's basically unchanging and even the smallest parts are not consumable.

One more idea that's fascinating, but beyond the scope of this study since it deals with psycho-analysis, is Bettelheim's findings that in the child's preconscious the house often symbolizes the body. In the case of the gingerbread house, it is a symbol of the mother who nurses the infant from her own body. Hansel and Gretel

were at the point where they had to go out into the world on their own, the way any child must grow less dependent on the parents and more on himself. This is a very scary transition for the child which is shown in Hansel and Gretel's situation. They were forced out into the world by their parents, particularly by the mother, who seems to abandon them. When the children greedily eat the gingerbread house, it is a symbolic gesture of trying to regain the security of dependance on the all-giving mother they once knew. While the house is the symbol of the mother's breast, its manifested form is food which is especially appealing to any child's hungry appetite. The school children made a good substitution for gingerbread with candy. The most frequent type was the lollipop. This provided a definite graphic image. The choice of the lollipop, a food eaten by sucking, also may have revealed the unconscious meaning of the house as a symbol of the mother's body.

Once the candy was accepted as the image, there still remained the problem of producing the image of a house made of candy. The different aged children's responses graphically show the developing stages of the transfer of the concept 'lollipop' to the concept 'house.'

The early four year olds' drawings, as in the one shown, have a house on one side of the page and lollipops on the other half. 'Candy...house,' one child explained, first pointing to the lollipops, then to the house. One verbal phrase, two separate images.

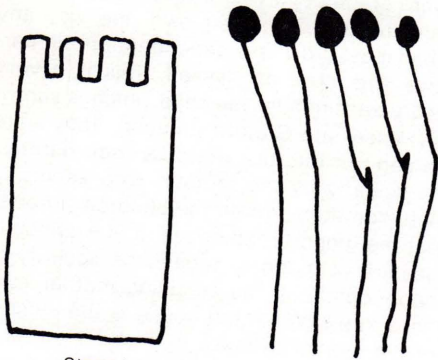
The second stage, also of four year olds, shows the house with the lollipop image superimposed. The different concepts begin to be amalgamated into one, but the conventional image is not affected by the new one.

The third stage is seen in the drawings of late fours to five year olds. The candy elements are enclosed within the house image, as the windows and doors are, sprinkled throughout or drawn within the windows. Even these children first draw the candy shapes on the back of the paper or in a corner, first identifying the images then incorporating them into the house.

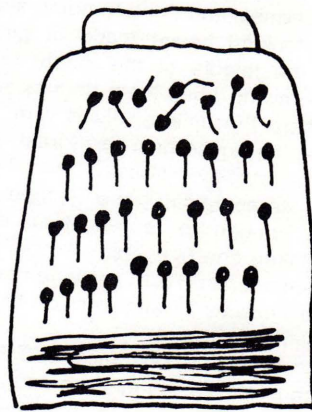
Late fives' drawings are similar with the candies enclosed within the outline, but these are given a definite order, rows of cookies, rows of lollipops. Children at this stage, when asked to draw the candy house again, with instructions emphasizing that the house is made of candy, are flexible to change. The lollipops are strung together imitating the original outline of the house. Even the windows and doors retain their conventional shapes but have circles making up the outlines.

The oldest children in this study, six year olds, drew such a house on their first try. As before, the basic image is retained with only slight modifications, such as at the roof line. Still, the conventional house shape is used as a standard, transformed to take the new information.

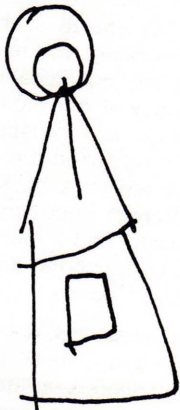




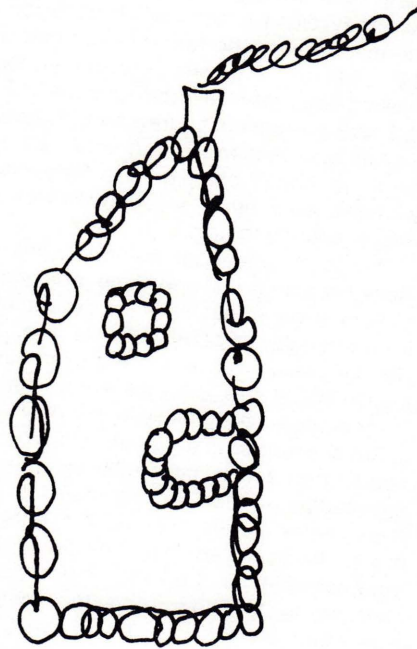
Stage I



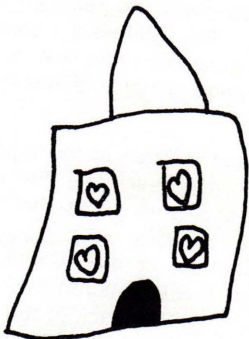
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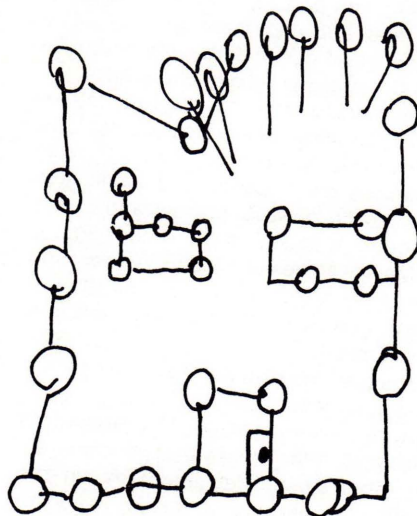
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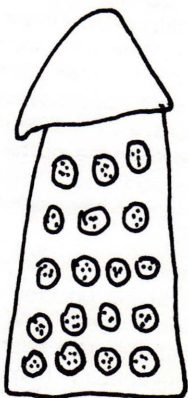
Stage IV-B



Stage III



Stage V



Stage IV



**Wall:** How does this convert to adult architecture as we know it?

**Demchyshyn:** The children relying on the configural outline and then filling it in with the lollipops isn't too much different from what Graves is doing with classical elements: the basic structuring remains the same, only the external visible appearance has changed according to the mood of the times. Graves is using interrupted linearity, similar to the assemblage of terms, or discontinuous logic. I really find it a bore. There hasn't been a change in the sub-structuring. There isn't even a re-definition of terms, whether visually as surface-form or intellectually as substantive-form. Probably Venturi was closer with his ideas of architecture as a sign-board: either the total form takes the shape of the disparate element, so that we get the building-as-an-elephant, or we get the traditional stereotyped building shape with little Lucy's making up the framework's appearance, such as we have with Graves' work. What's missing in adult architecture is the state of animism, giving inanimate objects feelings, will, and so forth. Children, after visiting Lucy the Elephant, write letters to her. One woman, now in her nineties, admitted that when she was a little girl she was so angry when a vendor wouldn't give her an orange, that she went over to Lucy and smashed her toes to smithereens. Was Lucy functioning as a surrogate at that moment? Now, that's an interesting stage in architecture's development. I wonder how many children would smash the steel I beams at the Farnsworth House. My own architecture has to do with creating facades which I can slash and smash through, whether through futility or catharsis. In one project I ripped apart the Villa Savoye. I've learned a lot from children.<sup>21</sup>

### The Last Word

**Wall:** I suppose it's customary to have the editor say 'the last word.' There are many stories, but the one I like best in this context is the story about George Washington passing by New Jersey's old Stone Schoolhouse. The children notice him. They all rush out and pay homage to one of our founding fathers. But I don't believe that the whole story had been told. Probably Washington wasn't astride his horse, but dismounted on his way to the outhouse because, you see, at that time, in the early 1700's, it was customary to situate schools near pig-pens and other such places of gratuitous delight.

That story has been enshrined in bronze on a plaque which now hangs beside the front door of the Old Stone Schoolhouse which stands preserved in the garden of the Newark Museum. The Old Stone Schoolhouse, with its floor boards all nice and tight, with its window frame fitting snugly against the masonry, is as much a fable as is the George Washington story. The true plight of children in architecture comes from the pen of John Bodine Thompson, a New Jer-



Old Stone Schoolhouse, Lyons Farm, Newark, 1886, (Courtesy: Newark Public Library)

sey resident writing in the early 1800's. His words should be cast in bronze and hung beside Washington's just to set the record straight, so to speak:

'Around the stove we sat upon four long hickory slabs elevated upon the top of four poles. And on these scaffoldings, suspended like Mahomet's coffin between the heavens and the earth, without any support for the back or rest for the feet, the little martyrs of science were compelled to sit eight mortal hours a day, while in loud and rapid whisper they conned the column of words in Webster's spelling book from "Baker" to "Zany," inclusive.

'The atmosphere of the schoolhouse was peculiar. How sweet the smell of sap as it exuded from the green hickory logs laid across the stove to dry! How cold the room in the morning! How the stove smoked and sulked, and would not burn until toward noon, when the sun shone so warm that we could have done without the stove if we could only have been in the sunshine! The crevices in the floor served to let the slate pencils out and the cold air in, enough to keep our feet apparently in the regions of perpetual snow, while our heads were roasting in the climate of the torrid zone above.'<sup>22</sup>

We can get one more good story from Thompson. The story has to do with how desks became situated along the perimeter of one room school houses in America. The story goes like this: before the advent of the public school system, an awful lot of education took place in kitchens. When the kitchen wasn't in use as a kitchen, it served as a classroom. Or maybe the pantry became a school. This extended the practice of what originally was the Dame School House system from England. The kitchen farmhouse-school was quite popular. Making do with what's around was the order of the day. Exercises were often chalked onto the floor. Maybe if the lesson was a 'classic,' it might have been carved into the floor boards. Well, one of the lessons prescribed dividing any ninety-four digit number by any sixty-five digit number.

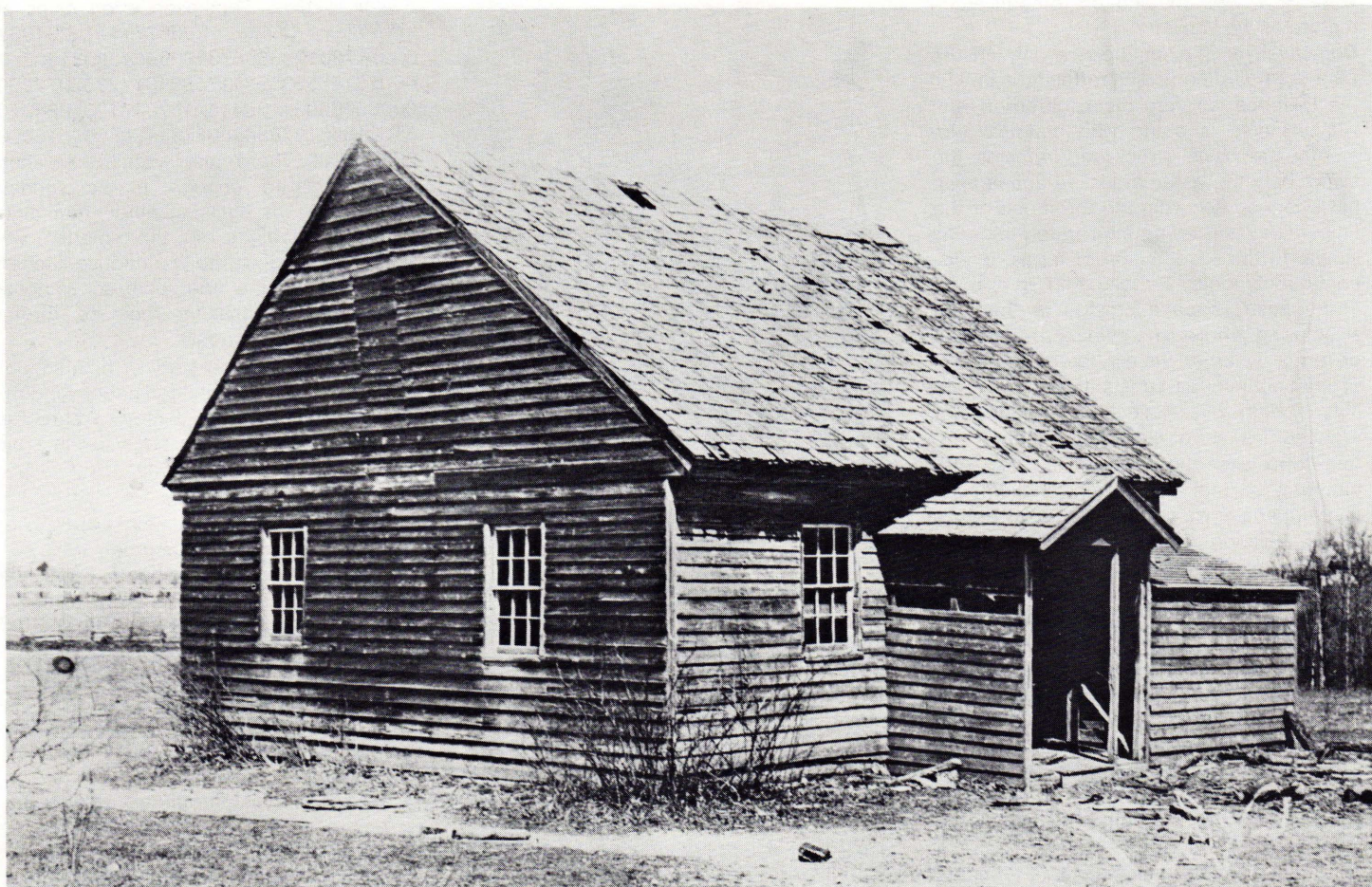
Swear to God. Thompson even gives an example: Divide 29382711914291833-0097172510266567328389643503490270-0602314755389311758958772355072000-000000000 by 3041421570171337804373-5108165819768844377641568960512000-000000000. There just wasn't any kitchen floor large enough to accommodate a bunch of kids chalking ninety-four digits by sixty-five digits, so the solution was simple. Abandon the farmhouse-kitchen-schools, build the one room schoolhouse with the proviso that the room be girdled by one long writing desk.

And this is the true story of how school-room desks became situated under windows in the state of New Jersey. Whereafter the custom spread from state to state but without anyone knowing why.

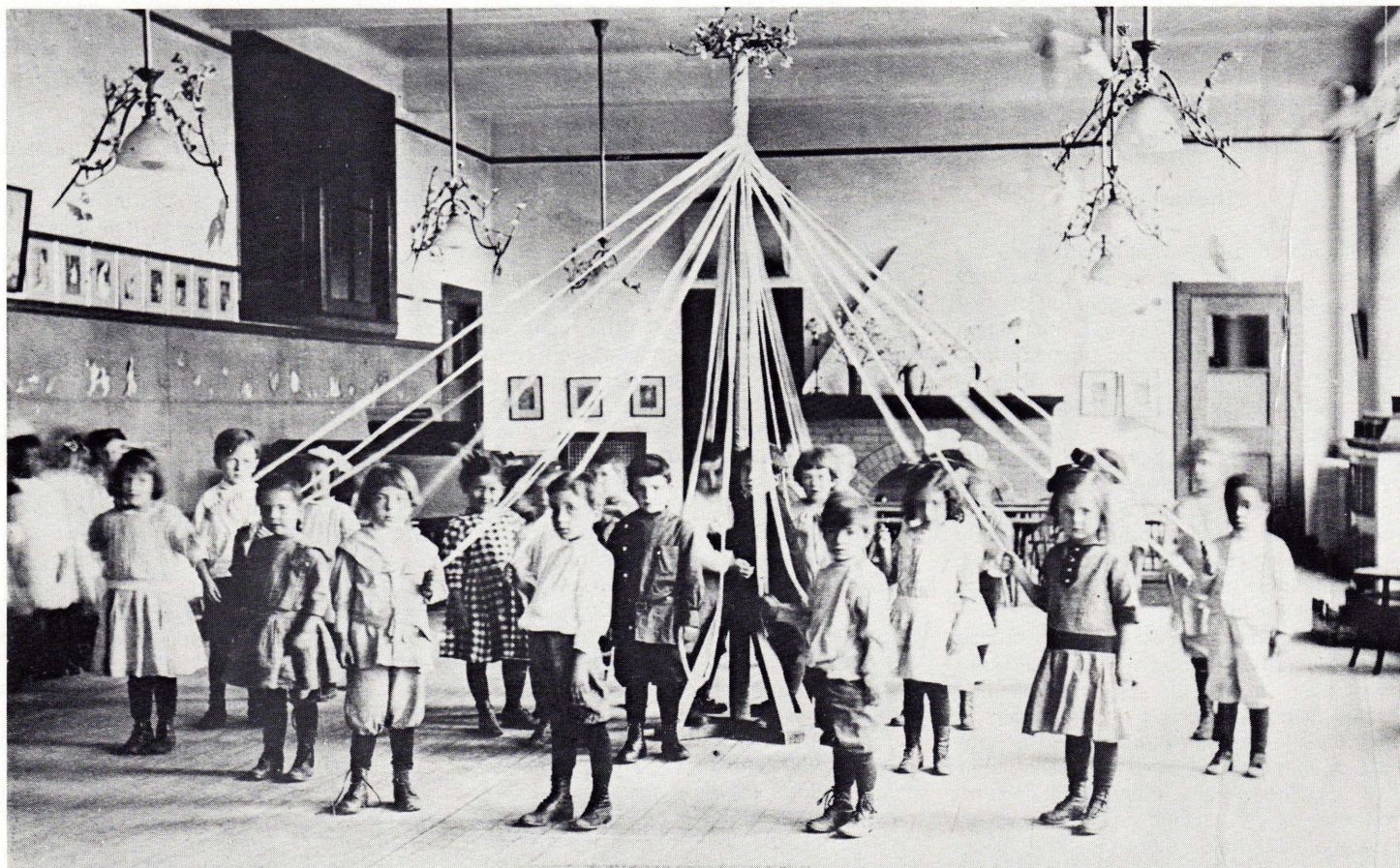
### Footnotes

1. Robert Cumming, extracts from *Discourse on Domestic Disorder*, 1975.
2. Allan Wexler, "Statements From the Artist," 1979.
3. Anni Bergman, extracts "From Mother to the World Outside: The Use of Space During the Separation-Individuation Phase," in *Between Reality and Fantasy, Transitional Objects and Phenomenon*, eds. Simon A. Grolnick et al. (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1978).
4. S. S. Asch, "Claustrophobia and Depression," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 14:711-729.
5. Michael Balint, *Thrills and Regression*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959).
6. Bergman, op. cit.
7. Rene A. Spitz, extracts from *No and Yes: On the Genesis of Human Communication*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1957).
8. Bergman, op. cit.
9. Alice Aycock, interview with Donald Wall, 1979.
10. Aycock, "Work 1972-1974," in *Individuals: Post-Movement Art in America*, ed. Alan Sontheim (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1977).
11. Aycock, interview, op. cit.
12. Aycock, in *Individuals*, op. cit.
13. Aycock, *Project Entitled "The Beginnings of a Complex..."*, (New York: Lapp Princess Press, Ltd. 1977).
14. Aycock, interview, op. cit.
15. Gordon Matta-Clark, interview with Donald Wall, 1977.
16. Will Insley, statement by the artist, 1979.
17. Dennis Oppenheim, interview with Donald Wall, 1979.
18. Harriet Feigenbaum, modified statement to Artpark Catalogue, 1977.
19. Elisa D'Arrigo, interview with Donald Wall, 1979.
20. John Hejduk, interview with Donald Wall, 1979.
21. Helen Demchyshyn, interview with Donald Wall, 1979.
22. John Bodine Thompson, "The Middle of the Century, part 2 — The Typical School," in *History of Education in New Jersey*, David Murray (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899).





*Old Indian Mills School House, (Courtesy: Newark Public Library)*



*Burnet Street School Kindergarten Maypole, dated 1904-1908, Newark, (Courtesy: Newark Public Library)*





Lafayette School Yard Kindergarten Games, Newark, (Courtesy: Newark Public Library)



# MIND CHILD ARCHITECTURE

exhibitions-conference  
celebrating the international  
year of the child

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DONALD WALL  
ALLAN WEXLER  
ROGER WELCH  
WORKS  
AND THE WORK OF FIFTY  
CHILDREN AGES  
THREE - TWELVE

## KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

DAVID ROCKEFELLER, JR.  
CHARLES MOORE  
BURTON WHITE  
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## CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

### DAY ONE: WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 3

- 2:30 p.m. Conference opens  
"Celebrating the International  
Year of the Child"  
Remarks from Dr. Aldaba Lim,  
special representative to I.Y.C.  
N.J.I.T.'s Van Houten Theater.
- 3:00 p.m. "The Art of Architecture in Edu-  
cation"  
David Rockefeller, Jr., chairman,  
The Arts, Education and Ameri-  
cans, Inc.  
N.J.I.T.'s Van Houten Theater.  
Reception following at Rutgers'  
Paul Robeson Center Multi-  
Purpose Room.
- 4:00 p.m. "Dennis Oppenheim: Genetic  
Extensions, Energy Transfers,  
Works With Offspring"  
Exhibit opens: Rutgers' Paul  
Robeson Center Art Gallery.
- 4:30 p.m. "Aspects of Childhood: Sources  
in Recent American Art/Arch-  
itecture"  
Exhibit opens: N.J.I.T.'s School  
of Architecture Gallery.
- 6:00 p.m. Banquet Dinner, by subscrip-  
tion, \$15.00 per person.
- 8:00 p.m. "Fairy Tales"  
Charles Moore, architect, prin-  
cipal, Moore/Grover/Harper,  
professor, U.C.L.A. School of  
Architecture  
N.J.I.T.'s Van Houten Theater.

### DAY TWO: THURSDAY OCTOBER 4

- 9:30 a.m. "The Personalization of Per-  
spective: Philosophical Concep-  
tions of Space"  
Martha Moore-Russell, Institute  
for Research in Human Develop-  
ment, Educational Testing Ser-  
vices, Princeton.  
"Children's Perception of Their  
Home Environment"  
Anthony Filipovitch, Urban and  
Regional Studies Institute, Man-  
kato State Univ., Minnesota.  
"Aesthetic Factors in Adult  
and Child Evaluation of Visual  
Space"  
John C. Baird, Dept. of Psy-  
chology, Dartmouth College,  
Hanover, N. H.  
"Family Structures in Narrative  
Art"  
Roger Welch, artist, New York.

- 10:30 a.m. "Spatial Orientation in Infancy"  
Linda Acredolo, Dept. of Psy-  
chology, Univ. of California,  
Davis.  
"Rural Children's Definition  
and Access to Environment"  
Roger Hart, Environmental  
Psychology Program, City Univ.  
of New York, Graduate Center.  
"Effects of Physical Settings  
on the Free Play Behavior  
of Pre-School Children From  
Diverse Backgrounds"  
Lawrence Harper and Karen  
Sanders Huie, Dept. of Applied  
Behavioral Sciences, Univ. of  
California, Davis.  
"Influences from Childhood"  
Donna Dennis, artist, New  
York.
- 11:30 a.m. "Development of Spatial Cogni-  
tion in Children"  
Herbert Pick, Jr. and Jeffrey  
Lockman, Institute of Child De-  
velopment, Univ. of Minnesota,  
Minneapolis.  
"Urban Children's Definition  
and Access to Environment"  
Roger Hart and Cecilia Perez,  
Environmental Psychology Pro-  
gram, City Univ. of New York,  
Graduate Center.  
"Processing Architectural Infor-  
mation: Is Inside Different From  
Outside?"  
Anthony Lutkus, child psycholo-  
gist, Rutgers University, Newark.  
"Childhood Memories: Literary  
Networks"  
Alice Aycock, artist, New York.
- 12:30 p.m. LUNCH
- 1:30 p.m. "Architecture and the Mytho-  
poetic World of Children"  
Bernard Kaplan, Clark Univ.,  
Worcester, Mass.  
"Aspects of Childhood: Sources  
in Recent American Art/Arch-  
itecture"  
speaker to be announced
- 2:30 p.m. "Cross-Cultural Environmental  
Modelling"  
David Stea, U.C.L.A. School  
of Architecture and Urban  
Planning.  
"The Dwindling Domain of Urban  
Childhood"  
Albert Eide Parr, Director Emer-  
itus, The American Museum of  
Natural History, New York.  
"Development of Cognitive Map-  
ping of Large Scale Environ-  
ments"  
Alexander Siegel, Dept. of Psy-  
chology, University of Houston,  
Texas.  
"Collaborating with Offspring"  
Dennis Oppenheim, artist, New  
York.
- 3:30 p.m. Jam Sessions Among Particip-  
ants



8:00 p.m. **"The Child's First Years in Architecture"**  
Burton White, Director, Center for Parent Education, Newton, Mass.

### DAY THREE: FRIDAY OCTOBER 5

9:30 a.m. **"Children as Planners of Classrooms"**

John C. Baird, Dept. of Psychology, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H.

**"Children's Unit Block Constructions"**

Constance Frazee, Center for Infancy and Early Childhood, Rutgers Univ., New Brunswick; Dorothy Gorenflo, Wheelock College, Boston, Mass.

**"Reflections of Thoughts and Feelings in Child-Drawn House"**  
Joseph Di Leo, former Director of Developmental Clinic at New York Foundling Hospital, New York.

**"Epistemology, Architecture and the Education of Children"**  
Richard Hatch, N.J.I.T. School of Architecture, Newark.

10:30 a.m. **"Functional Dimensions of Classroom Environments"**

Thomas David, Dept. of Psychiatry, Social Ecology Laboratory, Stanford Univ. Medical Center, California.

**"Block Play: The Child's Construction of Ecological Space"**  
Martha Moore-Russell, Institute for Research in Human Development, Educational Testing Services, Princeton.

**"Child-Drawn House as Psychological Portraiture"**

Isaac Jolles, School Psychological Services, Fairfax, Virginia.

**"Educationally Introducing the Child to the City"**

Joyce Meschan, Exec. Director, Vision Inc., Center for Environmental Design and Education, Cambridge, Mass.

1:30 a.m. **"A Comparison of Children's Cognitive Structuring of Animal Terms and the Design of Three Zoos: Implications for Designing Educational Environments"**  
J. Raul Magana, Harvard Univ. Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, Mass.

**"Frank Lloyd Wright, Building Blocks and Architecture"**

Robert D. Clements, Art Department, University of Georgia, Athens.

**"Drawing Fairy Tale Architecture and Other Fantasies"**

Helen Demchyshyn, experimental architect, New York.

**"Micro-City: A Mini-Society in the Classroom"**

Stanley Bennett, Institute for Child Study, University of Maryland, College Park.

12:30 p.m. LUNCH

1:30 p.m. **"The Psychology of Architecture Learning"**

Ann Taylor, Director, Institute for Environmental Education, Univ. of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

**"City Building in the Classroom: A Context for Invention"**

Doreen Nelson, Director, Center for City Building Educational Programs, Los Angeles, California.

2:30 p.m. **"The Architects-In-Schools Program: Its Philosophies and Realities"**

Aase Eriksen, Director, Educational Futures, Inc., Philadelphia, Pa.

**"Architectural Education For Gifted Children"**

T. Patrick Hill, Regional Co-ordinator, Gifted Education, New Jersey State Department of Education.

**"Block Architecture: From Froebel to Olds"**

Don Wall, N.J.I.T. School of Architecture, Newark.

**"The 500 Bedroom House: Childhood Memories of an 8 Year Old Architecture Junkie"**

Greg Smith, lawyer, Boston, Mass.

3:30 p.m. **"Workshop in Drawn-Architecture: A Problem Solving Curriculum"**

Nancy Renfro, lecturer, Austin, Texas.

**"Workshop in Street Smart: Activities for 4th-6th Grade Teachers in Exploring and Interpreting the Built Environment"**

Joyce Meschan, Exec. Director, Vision Inc. Center for Environmental Design and Education, Cambridge, Mass.

8:00 p.m. **"Cities Children Create In Their Poetry"**

Kenneth Koch, poet and playwright, Columbia University, New York.

### DAY FOUR: SATURDAY OCTOBER 6

9:30 a.m. **"Architecture in Adventure Playgrounds Around the World"**  
Bill Mikesell, architect, Newark.

**"Soft Squeezable Environments for Children"**

Dolores Pacileo, designer, New York.

**"Designs That Invigorate Students and Schools"**

Nancy Green, principal, Donovan and Green, designers, New York.

**"The First Chance Project: Blending Architecture and Psychology to Create a Responsive Environment for Young, Multi-Handicapped Children"**

Fran Archer, Cindy Legin-Bucell, et al., Kent State University, Ohio.

10:30 a.m. **"Designing the Day Care Center"**

Marvin Meltzer, architect, New York.

**"Designing for Children"**

George Cedeno, assoc. Hillier Architects, Princeton.

**"Children's Places: The Home Environment"**

Molly and Norman McGrath, writer and photographer, New York.

**"Play-Therapy Environments for Mentally and Physically Handicapped Children"**

Leland Shaw, Dept. of Architecture, Univ. of Florida.

11:30 a.m. **"Children's Places: The School Environment"**

Felix Drury, architect, New Haven, Connecticut.

**"Programming and Designing Environmentally Oriented Pre-Schools: The Aspen Wildwood Environmentally Oriented Pre-Project"**

Evan Nelson, educational consultant, Washington, D.C.

**"Child-Manipulable Environments"**

Stanley Thomasson, N.J.I.T. School of Architecture, Newark.

**"Research Based Design Guidelines for Child Care Environments"**

Gary T. Moore and Tim McGinty, Center for Architecture and Urban Planning Research, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

12:30 p.m. LUNCH

1:30 p.m. **"Designed Environments for Children"**

Beverly Russell, Editor-In-Chief Interiors Magazine, New York.

2:30 p.m. **"Participative Management for Children's Places"**

Ann-Marie Pollowy, architect, Yellow Springs, Ohio; W. H. Toliver, Sr., Morgan State Univ., Baltimore, Maryland.

**"Designing Learning Museums for Children"**

Ann W. Lewin, Exec. Director, Capital Children's Museum, Washington, D.C.



**"The Design Log Method of Programming and Assessing Children's Need"**

Mayer Spivack, Director Environmental Analysis and Design and Joanna Tamer, Director of Design Systems, Harvard Medical School, Cambridge, Mass.

4:00 p.m. **"Mind, Child, Architecture"**  
Buckminster Fuller, Philadelphia, Pa.

## EXHIBITION SCHEDULE

**"Where A Child's Architecture Dreams Come True"**

September 23 — November 25

The Newark Museum

49 Washington Street, Newark

Hrs: 12:00-5:00 daily

**"Aspects of Childhood: Sources in Recent American Art/Architecture"**

October 3 — 26

The New Jersey Institute of Technology

School of Architecture Gallery,

367 High Street, Newark

Hrs: 12:00 — 5:00, Monday thru Friday

**"Dennis Oppenheim: Genetic Extensions, Energy Transfers, Works With Offspring"**

October 3 — 30

Rutgers University Newark

The Paul Robeson Campus Center Gallery,

350 High Street, Newark

Hrs: 1:00 — 6:00, Monday thru Friday

Conference sessions to be held at

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School of Architecture

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and at

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For further information contact:

Professor Donald Wall

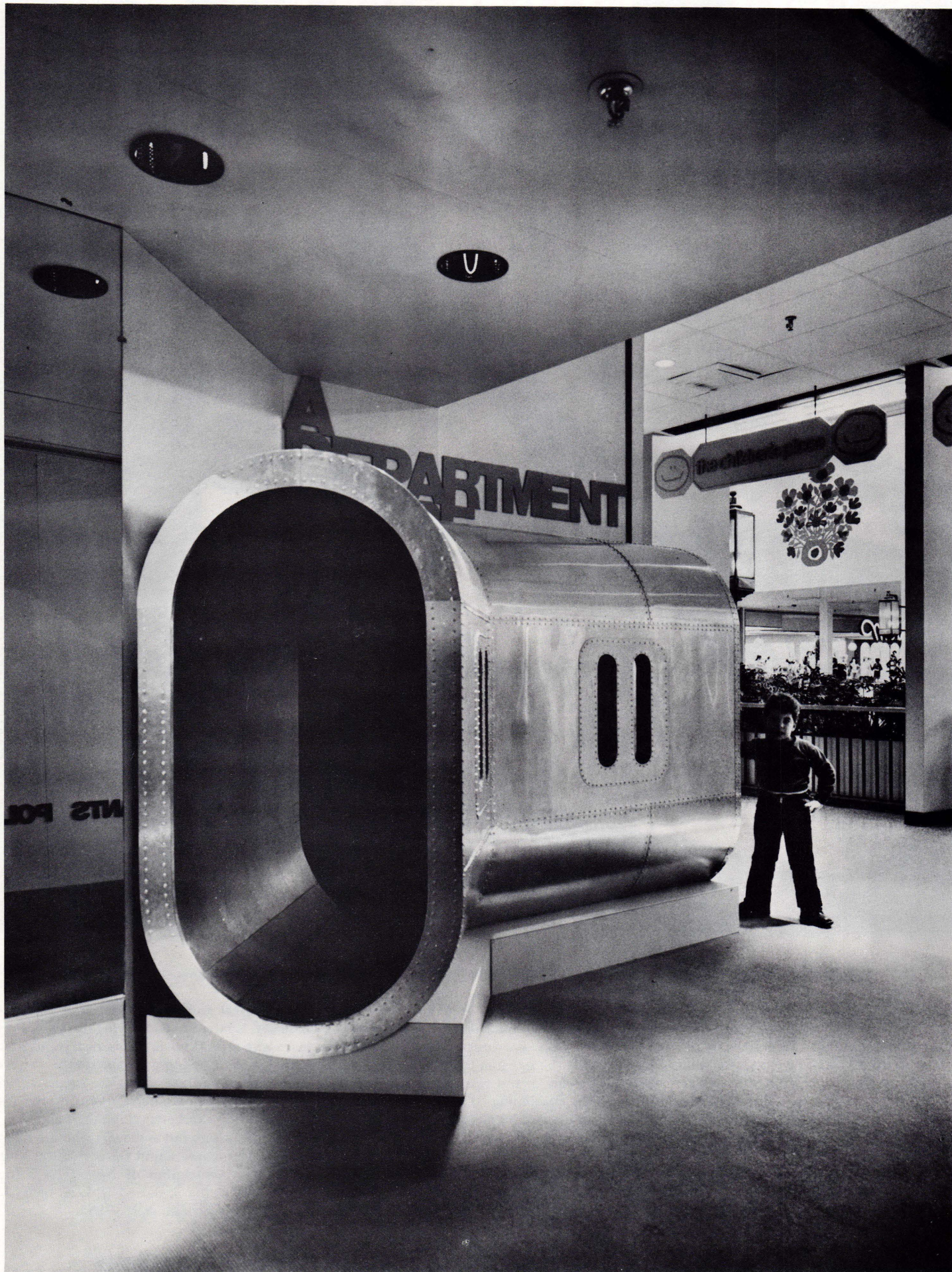
Director, Mind, Child, Architecture

The New Jersey Institute of Technology

323 High Street, Newark, New Jersey 07102

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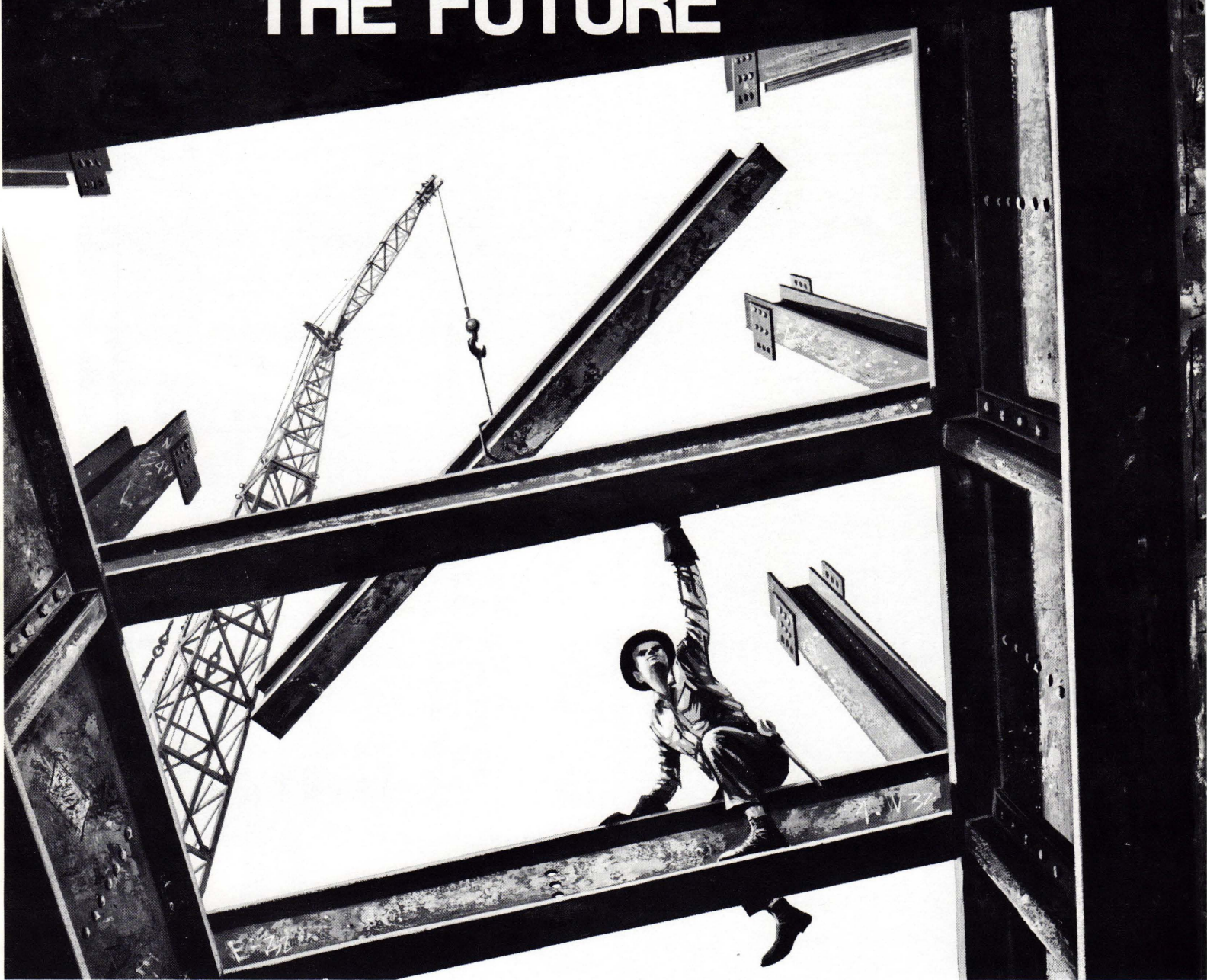




The Children's Place store, Echelon, N.J., George Nelson and Co., 1970, (Photo: Norman McGrath)



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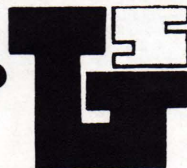
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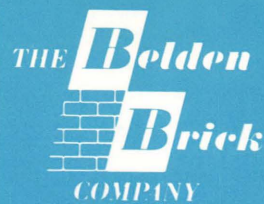


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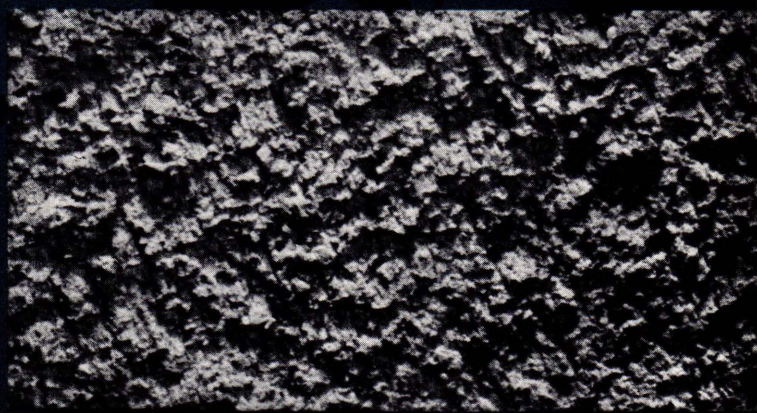
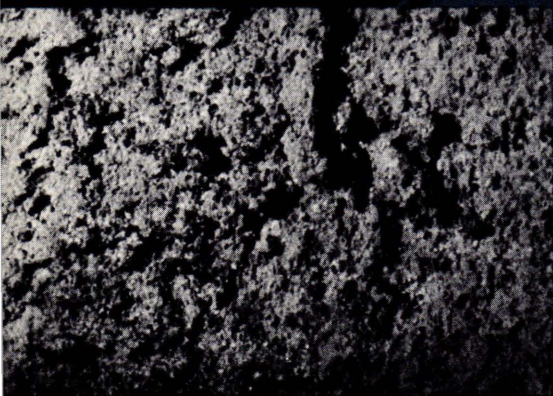


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